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MODERN ENGLISH STATESMEN

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BY

George Robert

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OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE, BARRISTER-AT-LAW

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Modern English Statesmen

STATESMEN AND STATESMANSHIP

It is one of the unsolved problems of history whether great statesmen rule their country or whether they merely register the desires and opinions of their age, their race and their nation. It is the question whether great men govern or obey. It is no answer to produce a royal proclamation or a chancellor's ruling, or even the statute book of an elected parliament. The fundamental mystery still remains, whether any man or parliament, however despotic or however wise, has ever made a people do anything that was outside the tradition of the race. It is the problem whether racial or national tradition is not altogether more powerful than the orders of the most masterful government that ever existed. Did Augustus order the Roman people to obey him as their emperor, or did the united impulse of the republican citizens order Augustus to organize them as an Empire ? Would it not be near the truth to say that the people of Rome had already made themselves into a despotism long before they allowed Augustus to act so openly ? Did the late German Emperor rule the Germans, or did he carry out the imperious will of that race ? Were they servile to him, or was he servile to them ? Did Chatham force the English people to build an Empire, or did he merely act as their organizing agent ? Do statesmen express their own will, or the will of those who seem to be their subjects ? The problem is put into the balance almost every time that we weigh a historical fact.

The question may never be answered in any absolute way : and this for the very good reason that there may be no conclusive answer. It is only the timekeeper and the drill-sergeant who have rigid rules of life. Nature, being neither a pedant nor a bureaucrat, has a happy way of doing the best with each case as it comes along. Sometimes the autocrat has his will for a time; and then the rising of a people will toss him away as easily as a wave tosses a cork. There is a continual giving and taking between a people and those who govern them. It is impossible to make a case for the victory of one side which quite excludes the other. Nevertheless the evidence would seem to point to the ultimate supremacy of national tradition —which is national will—over the will of the statesman. A governor can survive for a time; it may be that for a whole lifetime he may impose his rule against the wishes of his subjects. There are cases where a series of despots have ruled against the will of a race; but sooner or later, the racial command pushes its way through the weight of authority above. Nevertheless, the argument again (with the uncertain indecision of Nature once more) moves across to the other side, when we have to admit that although a nation usually has the power to overthrow an autocratic statesman—be he king or banker—yet, since there cannot be cause without effect, the nation that emerges is not quite the same that it would have been had it never been submerged under the despotism. To that extent the great autocrats win. But, again, in the final summing up it is probable that the effect of the personal ruler is as the blowing of a contrary wind against an ocean tide: it blows the breakers into whiter foam; it cannot stop the irresistible flow. A book on statesmen is, after all, merely a book on foam and not on tides. But if they are foam, they are the result of tides; and, to that extent, they are symbolic.

It is not generally recognized that the action of a statesman may be very spectacular on the page of history, and yet he may have done nothing but touch the surface of the national life. The vast bulk of human life, in a broad sense, has been almost untouched by the laws and ordinances declared by ruling men and representative assemblies. One talks loosely of despotism, but it may be very blatant and yet not go very deep. An Englishman who knew Russia under the autocratic Czar said that there was more individual liberty in that country than in England. There was probably a touch of paradox in that statement; but there was certainly more than a touch of truth also. For the greater part of its career the human race progressed without much of what we should call "government" to-day. Government is a comparatively modern idea; and to that extent statesmanship is only a modern trade. It is a trade that has been growing since the Renaissance with alarming speed; and perhaps already it is untrue to say that it does not affect the fundamentals of human existence; but it is only recently that it has become untrue. Even in the eighteenth century the Chathams and the Burkes and their kind could make mighty displays in the Houses of Parliament and yet have comparatively little effect on the lives of the citizens in general. They had scarcely thought of such coercive measures as Conscription Acts, Insurance Acts, and the dozens of ways in which the State now invades the Englishman's home that was once his castle. It is only during the last half-century that the modern politicians have realized that by cleverly drafted laws and a faithful army and police force they may reduce the ordinary citizen to a more helpless creature than a black slave.

If one gets away from the popular notion of the orthodox history-books that statesmen have been the chief driving force in our national life; if one can regard the whole scene of history with an unprejudiced eye; then kings and governors will still take a real and permanent place in the picture—but they will stand as mere figures in a landscape, as it were, with mountains and rivers of national traditions far bigger than themselves. English history will be seen to be the story of a race, and not a national portrait gallery. It would not be too extreme a statement to say that statesmen are only the trivial side of history. It would be almost possible to write an intelligible account of the development of England without mentioning personal names except at very occasional moments. For example, before the Conquest it might be necessary to mention Alfred the Great, and perhaps Cnut, with Bede and Dunstan ; but the main early story, at least, might be told in that impersonal way which will seem natural when we remember that we are dealing with a nation which scarcely as yet made laws in parliaments and had not yet invented politics and politicians. The people of those days obeyed the rules of their own traditions, as they were maintained in their own local courts : they had scarcely yet heard of kings' courts and their justices. The Norman Conquest itself could almost be told without mentioning the name of William ; for he was only one of a group of freebooter feudal lords who were searching for lands and plunder. But though we could easily tell the whole truth about the Conquest without mentioning the leader, yet, strangely enough, it would be necessary to introduce this William as a distinctive individual when we had to tell how he conquered, not our Anglo-Saxon selves, but his own unruly barons. His conquest of England was mainly a part in the collective rôle of a military group more highly skilled in arms than the opposing native tribe. It is unnecessary to remember the names of the British generals who have crushed the hundred and one native races in our pursuit of the British Empire ; and William was merely a general of a superior tribe, so far as the actual invasion went. But his crushing of the baronial independence was far more an act depending on his personal will and individual energy : it was the policy of a specific man.

So one might continue pointing out isolated individual leaks which must stand out as islands in the sea of national history. As a romance, as a way of attracting the attention of the young learner, there are thousands of names worth remembering in the history of England. As a scientific statement of sociological development, it might all be told with very few personalities. Such as Henry II and Edward I might justly assert their right to a distinctive place : and Becket and Simon de Montford would have to be there ; as Lanfranc and Anselm might have to be mentioned beside the early Norman kings. But why should we trouble to think of the names of the dozens of self-seeking, quarrelsome lords who called themselves kings and statesmen during the later Plantagenets and the Wars of the Roses? Warwick the Kingmaker was, like Henry IV, little more than a man seeking for place and lands; and it is not scientific to call the plans of an adventurer by the dignified name of statesmanship. On the other hand, Edward IV and Richard III, although still adventurers, begin a new line of more individualist kings; and all the Tudors except Edward VI need naming and explaining. By the days of the Tudors it was becoming the more usual habit to rule England by instructions from Westminster and Whitehall; and the personality of the men who gave these orders was therefore of more importance than when a monarch was mainly a military leader.

From this time personal names are thicker on the pages of our history-books, for government had now become a profession, and was daily becoming a more and more successful one—from the point of view of the governors. They were getting more and more successful in making the people obey the laws that the politicians made. The English were gradually getting more laws, and, on the whole, less freedom. But even now there is no reason why the personalities of these later days should cumber our history to the extent they do. Indeed, they rather hamper the tale. The vitally important story of the Reformation—when a gang of adventurers seized the Church lands in the same way that William and his Norman knights had seized their plunder—this fundamental change in English policy, from mediæval to modern, does not peculiarly attach itself to any individual. To discuss Henry's fancy for Anne Boleyn is only to put the student on the wrong tack. Or to name the theologians is to assume that a religious principle was at stake, when it scarcely was. Whereas we should be concentrating the whole attention on the crowd of insignificant Court officials who were feathering the nests of themselves and their friends out of the Church estates. They were an impersonal class—powerful only when taken in bulk. Thomas Cromwell was only one of these adventurers, and, except as a convenient symbol, there is no real need to mention even him. William Cecil, Lord Burghley, a few years later, stands in a unique position, as we shall see: he was a man who really did govern.

But if the list of personal names grows fuller as history continues, yet it must be carefully noted that, although a statesman may make many new laws and may get them obeyed by the people, still it is possible that these laws may remain only on the surface of the national life. Think of all the violent legal changes during the great civil war of the Stuart period—changes expressed by Act of Parliament and enforced by governors' commands. Then realize how insignificant all these were in affecting the national life, compared with the entirely unofficial invention of a few factory machines during the second half of the eighteenth century. Of course, had it not been for Oliver Cromwell and his dismal men, the trading and manufacturing classes would not have been so well prepared for the Industrial Revolution; if they had not first successfully gone through the political revolution of the Stuart days, they would not have been ready to effect the far greater changes of the eighteenth century. Can any one claim that the Great Charter of John has had as much effect on England as the development of our coal and iron? The quarrel between the Lancastrians and Yorkists was merely a back-street brawl compared with the struggle between merchants for the conquest of our economic life. The whole Statute Book has not affected our social system as much as the invention of steam power and the telegraph. Political affairs are only the secondary effect of industrial and private business. The point to grasp at the moment is the fact that it is not mainly by the acts and administrations of statesmen that a nation is most drastically affected. A race is usually only radically impressed by causes of which the governors are not aware until everything is settled. The statesman is usually in the position of a policeman who arrives when the fight is over. Most of the important things that happen in a State are begun and finished by people who pay as little attention to rulers as rulers pay to them. We must, if we are to get the main proportions right, get it firmly in the mind that the sphere of statesmanship may be on the top, and therefore in a very prominent position; yet it does not by any means follow that its influence at all corresponds to its display—for much the same reason that a regimental band is not the most important part of the regiment.

It scarcely seems fair to the rest of this book to explain at such length that its subject is unimportant. Yet the argument has only attempted to put statesmen in their proper place—not to dismiss them. Quite apart from their personal merits, they are such useful symbols of national movements. To borrow from Voltaire, if they had not existed it would have been necessary to invent them. The ones chosen for this volume have been selected because they stand for great tendencies far greater than themselves. Cromwell is chosen because he seems the first representative of modern statesmanship. William Cecil (in many ways the most serious and most accomplished statesman that England ever possessed) might be put first for many reasons; but, as will be discussed later, it is better to regard him as the last of the old school, instead of the first of the new. Cromwell marks the final blowing out of the Middle Ages, which gave their last flicker with Charles Stuart. When the head of that strange figure fell in Whitehall it marked very dramatically the end of the old era. History has no hard boundary lines; but man's mind, being limited and easily confused, must fix dates which will keep him from chaotic wandering. The day of Charles I's execution is one of those most useful dates. The mediæval system had been long time dying; but until Charles was beheaded there was something of it left. And his chief executioner is the most fitting figure to express the new system that was to take its place. The mediæval Monarchy, based to a large extent on the nation, gave way to the modern Oligarchy, based on a privileged class. There was a sense in which Charles had stood for the whole people; and, especially during the eleven years of his absolute rule without a parliament, he had somewhat definitely been the protector of the poor against the rich. If Cromwell and the Commonwealth can be generalized at all, it can only be said that this party stood for the supremacy of the rich. The Commonwealth was the triumphant government of the merchants and the smaller county gentry, who had risen on the raided wealth of the mediæval Church. The complete triumph of the merchant was not to come until the days when Robert Peel, the son of a merchant prince, rose to be the Chief Minister of England. But that was not to be until the Reform Act of 1832 had put the middle trading class in supreme possession of the franchise. From Cromwell to Peel the merchant and manufacturer and small landlord (that is, the middle class) had been continually growing in power; but it was not yet, as a general rule, considered seemly for anyone except a member of the aristocracy to hold office. There was still a vague belief that blue blood had some inherent right to rule. There was still a distrust of the political adventurer, carried to such a degree that we find the nation trusting the political fool—but, after all, the fool does less harm by his folly than the knave by his wits. So although Cromwell by the swords of his Ironside troopers began the process which put the middle classes into power as the basis of modern England, yet for generations to come an aristocratic oligarchy governed on behalf of the new commercialists; and took a very liberal share of the spoils of wealth, and almost all the offices of State, in return for their services.

The three succeeding figures of this book are from the period of the aristocratic oligarchy, which was to give way to the plutocratic oligarchy in the lifetime of Sir Robert Peel. Robert Walpole is chosen partly because he is the finest example of themselves that the Oligarchs have to offer. In Walpole they rose to their first worthy success; and it was a success which they never repeated with as much intellect or as much moral sanity. Walpole was the first and best balanced statesman that the oligarchy produced. Of course, many facts must be admitted against him. He did not rise very far above the somewhat selfish ideals of his period and his class. He was in power as the First Minister of a nation whose ruling class was primarily interested in the making of trading profits and the raising of rents. Cromwell had finally decided that the merchant adventurers of the Tudor foundation were to be given a free head in English social development ; the middle class was established in power, and remained there even though Charles II came back. By Walpole's day these merchants had enormously increased in influence : the City of London had even more to do with the Revolution of 1688 than with the Great Rebellion against Charles I : and William of Orange gave more attention to the invitation he got from the City magistrates than he gave to the welcome of the peers. Walpole was, above all else, the expression of a merchants' England. But there was a broad dignity about his government which remembered that there was a national price which it was unwise to pay for the benefits of mercantile success. He accepted the fact that fate had made England a great trading community ; but he showed no intention of pressing that development beyond its due growth. He was prepared to help English merchants to get their fair share of the wealth of the world : he was prepared to help them to trade as honest men. He was not ready to turn the strength of the British people into an organized scheme for playing the part of pirates to the universe. He protested against fighting Spain just because a set of City merchants saw their way to plundering Spanish commerce ; he only gave way to the popular wishes with the cynicism of a gentleman who finds he has become hopelessly involved in a disreputable trading company. The day may even yet come when his famous prophecy, " They will be wringing their hands soon," will come true : when the British Empire may repentantly admit that it has been too unbounded in its greed, and that the wealth of the world is not worth its envy and contempt. Robert Walpole was the last great English statesman who had that restful sense of social development which has been lost in the tumult of modern government. He carried into the modern period that conception of society which was almost the main characteristic of the mediæval system : namely, that the growth of a people, like the growth of a child, is bounded by natural laws, and cannot be forced by Acts of Parliament or regulations of departments of State. Walpole would have allowed the trade of England to grow in this natural manner: he did not believe in sudden outbursts of energy, just as an intelligent man does not believe that an infant can be forced to full stature in a year. He would have had England grow, most certainly —but with dignity and peace. The chaos of war he regarded with the contempt of a wise man, and the practice of mercantile piracy with the aversion of a gentleman. He was one of the few modern statesmen who have shown more respect to the traditions of their race than to the intrigues of those unrestful beings who imagine that their passing thoughts and ambitions are the wisdom of eternity. Walpole had no desire for great changes: he only wanted to take the next step, and to take it with skill and dignity. Indeed, he was a curious survival of an older school of thought, one who would have been better suited to the age of the late Plantagenets.

The Pitts have been chosen as the expression of everything that Walpole was not. As a family, they are a typical example of the modern English ruling class. They rose into wealth as the heirs of that somewhat unscrupulous Indian trader, Diamond Pitt; and they won their right to office by a clever linking (by marriage) with the older aristocracy of England. They therefore represented both the mercantile basis of the government of that period, and also the bluer blood of the families that acted as the agents of this middle-class plutocracy. The mental, moral and physical character of the elder William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, cuts across every line of his rival Walpole. Pitt was excitable and a bundle of hysterical emotions; he was unscrupulous and ungenerous in his grasping at power; he was rotten-timbered in physical structure, and his brain was more than once beyond normal control. Walpole had been content to develop his country with sober care. Pitt dreamed of the building of the British Empire with the terrific force of a nightmare. To make the Empire larger and wealthier became a monomania in his mind. The world in his imagination became a colossal prize-ring, in which he was to drive every opponent over the ropes—with as much blood spilt as possible. His method was physical force; which is not surprising, for he did not possess the brains necessary for diplomacy or systematic thought. He believed in war, which is naturally the first resource of the dull-witted, as it is the last hope of the wise. The Pitts stood for conquest by war, while Walpole had insisted that what could not be won by peaceful methods was rarely worth the getting. Walpole was exceedingly balanced in his intellect; Chatham was entirely at the mercy of his unstable emotions. Walpole wanted to leave the nation to follow the course of its natural social growth in an orderly and unforced way. Chatham had the temperament of a gambler on the Stock Exchange or an American hustler; he regarded the British Empire as a thing to be "developed"; as a speculator regards the fields and mines of a new colony. With all his pompous manners and imperial pose, Chatham was at heart a company promotor, who thought he saw a good thing in the English race as an investment. He was by no means sordid or selfish in his objects; he was that which was a good deal worse in a statesman—full of heroic and poetical ideals, which made the rather sentimental Englishmen think that they were led by a genius. Whereas they were being misled (as we shall find when we examine the evidence) by something not far from a mental degenerate, in the medical sense. The younger Pitt was the true son of his father Chatham, and completes the family picture. He was not so pushing a salesman as his self-made father; and he had to depend more on his better education and on his inherited position. If he had not been the son of the Earl of Chatham it is safe to say that history would have known little or nothing of his existence. The economists have proved that he was an incompetent financier; and the military experts have proved that he was more than an incompetent bungler at the game of war. It was only as his father's son that he crept into the history-books, and has continued to defy criticism because the historians have usually preferred to copy each other's opinions instead of valuing the facts for themselves. The Pitt Myth is one of those interesting superstitions that have gripped the human mind. It is one of the clearest examples of the social law that men are not so much controlled by their intellect as by their emotions. It also illustrates the troublesome fact that an accidental error of thought can become by inheritance and age more permanent than the truth. The Pitts are the type of the modern statesmen who imagine that a race can be changed by Act of Parliament, manipulated by smart administrators, and driven to its destiny by brilliant soldiering. They represent the change from progress by orderly national tradition to the acrobatic feats of individual energy. They are a clear example of the process by which government has passed from being the expression of the desire of the racial majority (which is near democracy) to the imposing of the will of the governors (which is certainly autocracy, and usually tyranny).

Edmund Burke was not really a statesman in the sense of being a politician or administrator. He did comparatively little in Parliament or in office—he never rose to Cabinet rank. He was a political pamphleteer and a literary orator, who supplied a certain intellectual padding to the real politicians, who were not too well supplied with brains; and, when they possessed them, were too full of intrigues for office to spend time over mere matters of principle or problems of scientific government. Let it not be supposed that Burke represented intellect. He was a bundle of emotions, like the Earl of Chatham; but they were emotions tinged with historical facts and logical argument; whereas when Chatham ceased to be hysterical he only too frequently became stupid. But Burke had the makings of a better man; he is an interesting example of a young man who was ruined by going into politics, when he might have spent a harmless life as a country parson or a minor poet. He was a sentimentalist of the first rank; and his chief work in politics was to deck out a vast amount of shallow folly and disreputable intrigue in the admirable colours of a florid literary style and a question-begging logic. Burke was one of the men who become the unconscious tools of professional politicians. The Whig " principles " that had so cleverly tricked England in 1688 were getting rather soiled by the days of George III. It was Burke who re-dressed them and gave them another career in the great work of making the English nation believe that its modern politicians are serious statesmen. Burke is an example of the vast harm that can be done by lending moral and intellectual support to a class that is generally incapable of using such help. He was not a great man either in intellect or in morals; but he was great enough to give his friends too much credit for possessing both. He is perhaps chiefly interesting as an example of the half-intelligent, half-honest persons who are always intruding with conviction and enthusiasm into political life. The main result of their endeavours is that the politicians are able to operate behind a smoke screen of honester men. Not that Burke failed to affect history: it is fair to suggest that his action against the French Revolution modified the history of Europe to this present day. Had it not been for Burke's assistance, it is doubtful whether the politicians would ever have persuaded the English people to struggle until they had crushed the French Revolution. It was Burke's shrill shrieking (like a philosopher in a nightmare) that persuaded not only England, but Europe also, that the Revolution was altogether evil and must be altogether broken. In other words, had it not been for his utter failure to judge the Revolution with the calmness of a philosopher and the impartiality of a historian, Europe would have seen that there was much that was inevitable and necessary in the rising of the French people against their over-centralized bureaucracy. Europe would have seen that the crimes of the Revolution were the deeds of a small gang of scoundrels and fanatics who come to the top in every revolution; and that the men who made the Terror no more represented France than the last sensational murderer represents his race. Had it not been for Burke's melodramatic rhetoric it would have been obvious that the kings of Europe were not concerned with the salvation of the French (as they pretended), but were only anxious to plunder a nation when it was weakened by a struggle with internal anarchy. It was Burke's unbalanced hysteria that probably turned the scale, that encouraged the royal and political adventurers of Europe to attack France, and therefore gave the French militarists and rogues the chance they were seeking—an excuse for appealing to the French nation to defend its frontiers by invading the lands of its neighbours first. Hence the calamity of the Revolutionary Wars; hence the greater calamity of Napoleon. If any one man was guilty of turning the Revolution from a noble beginning to an ignoble conclusion, it was Edmund Burke, the sentimentalist. He is an example of the fact that the well-meaning man can do more harm than the rogue when he meddles with public affairs.

As for Benjamin Disraeli, he, like Burke, did little in politics proper. He was certainly Prime Minister of England twice; he was one of the most audaciously brilliant figures that the Houses of Parliament have seen. But his political deeds were only the idle moments of his life. Disraeli was a thinker; and what he thought he put into his books, and rarely translated into the deed of an Act of Parliament. He was perhaps the most brilliant thinker of his age; and he was great because he refused to be original and went back to the thoughts of older days. Disraeli was the only modern statesman who has had the courage to tell his nation that it was rotten from the foundation. His *Popanilla* is the most amazingly clever burlesque of modern society that has been written—which perhaps is the reason why there has been almost a universal agreement not to read it. It is one of the really dangerous books that threaten to undermine the foundations of modern life. It is the sort of book that would be suppressed under the Defence of the Realm Act—if the censors had the brains to grasp its meaning. There would, however, be the embarrassment that it was written by Queen Victoria's favourite Tory Prime Minister. Disraeli is chosen as a type of modern English statesmen not because he is really a type, but mainly because he is almost a unique specimen. He was so much wiser than his colleagues, and so much more advanced than the people of his time, that he could do scarcely anything in politics, except amaze Europe by his brilliancy and convulse it by his wit. Indeed, he had all the qualities by which the unscrupulous adventurer could have fooled his generation—had he desired. But Disraeli was one of the honest men. His greatest credit in history is that he faced the people with the truth about themselves—and then turned to politics with the cynical air of a man who preferred to take his amusement in the House of Commons rather than the card-room or the racecourse; because he had brains, and Parliament gave him more scope to use them. The career of Disraeli shows us why a wise and honest man must fail in modern politics—mainly for the reason that a fish cannot live on dry land. One must be within the facts of one's environment.

Such are the five examples here chosen to represent English modern statesmanship, with the main comparison between themselves. But it is really more important to see where they stand as against the main background of English history and English politicians. It is necessary, for one thing, to find some general standard by which to compare the modern statesmen with the men of the earlier days. It will be useful to determine why Burghley, the last of the older school, was so distinctly apart from Oliver Cromwell, whom we have called the first of the new men. Perhaps one main point of difference can be seen if the men of the older school are called statesmen, and those of the modern school are termed politicians; suggesting thereby the difference between a skilled doctor and a quack: or the difference between one who rules and one who talks. But, of course, the statement would need qualifications to save such men as Cromwell, Walpole and Disraeli from the imputation. For the vast bulk of the modern men the term "politician" is obviously fitting. Let examples be taken at the two extremities; compare Burghley with a politician of to-day, and the justice of the comparison will be admitted. Burghley was an exceedingly skilled administrator of the most technical kind; the State Papers of his period are covered with his notes. He was not only what we should now call Prime Minister, he was also permanent secretary of all the Government departments as well. In the most precise meaning, to the smallest detail, he ruled England for almost the whole of Elizabeth's reign —until his age forced him to hand over the work to his son. Admitting that he never had the intellect or the courage to protest against the stupidity of the Reformation economic settlement as a whole, nevertheless such an effective accomplishment of technical skill in devising a national policy, and ability to carry it into practice, has not been repeated in our history. His policy has vitally affected the history of his country to this day: and it is conceivable that we may even go back to it in many of its details.

Can one imagine anything more remote from the work of the modern politicians? They spend their time on the public platform and in the Houses of Parliament. Their main claim to fame is their power of speech. As regards administration, they flit from department to department, as fits their political necessities, and scarcely touch details at all. They are primarily orators and debaters. They usually receive their policy from the permanent administrators of their departments; and they adopt so much of it as suits their intrigues, so much of it as will bring them again into power at the next election. They are not so much thinkers or administrators as gramophones. They reproduce their records. Burghley was as the poles apart from such men. Do we ever hear that he made a public speech? We do know that he left so many State Papers that it would be beyond belief that he had even seen them, if it were not that so many of them bear his own handwriting. There are over twelve hundred documents for his seventy-fifth year alone, when he was almost past work. Mr. Gladstone, one of the modern statesmen, was famous because he wrote so many postcards, and he also became still more famous for his rhetoric: indeed, he probably owed his position in English politics to his fine voice. In Burghley's day there were higher tests than these.

We must remember, to make the comparison quite complete, that Burghley was also an accomplished scholar. He could write in Latin, French and Italian as well as he could in English. How many of our modern statesmen had such an advantage during the recent Paris Peace Congress? But there was a still more fundamentally useful quality which he possessed: he was incorruptibly honest. That is, he always considered the interests of the English nation before his own. No enemy of England even tried to bribe William Cecil. One historian has told us that he risked everything to protect the State, and many times he risked much to protect his friends from unjust attack. There are still people who consider themselves educated who are roused to the point of irritation when it is claimed that the Ministers of Queen Elizabeth were probably as efficient and as honest as any who have ever served this State. The irritation is a very interesting exhibition of the narrow and local prejudice of a normal modern mind. Not having the time to consider the facts, or lacking the ability to weigh them when known, the modern man assumes that everything is better to-day than three hundred years ago; he assumes that things must have necessarily "developed" or "evolved" in the meantime. It is to no avail that such an authority as Dr. Cunningham tells us that Burghley "set a very remarkable example of impeccability. He was scrupulously careful to avoid profiting in any way by his political influence, and refused the gifts from successful suitors which were at that time the accepted method of making payments for work done." One could quote, at great length, the same high authority on the subject of Burghley's efficiency; for example: "The notes on petitions submitted to him show how carefully he read them, while he sometimes conducted a Royal Commission on his own account, and collected very many papers containing expert opinion from various quarters. He was constantly at work in revising the estimates and cutting down expenses . . . all overhauled by him in the hope of checking abuses and securing a reasonable amount of honesty." As to his personal honesty, the *Dictionary of National Biography* sums up: "There is good reason for believing that if his father had not left him an ample patrimony he would have died as poor a man as many another of Elizabeth's ablest and most faithful servants." Can the modern mind sincerely believe that such a character sketch would be true of a typical modern politician? It is a matter of opinion, of course; but in this case it certainly would appear that the opinion here expressed is on the same side as the facts. The attitude of the normal "modern" man defending his centuries is rather like the healthy, if somewhat unpolished, defence by the village patriots of their local cricket team, after it has suffered its sixth consecutive defeat.

It is better to face the facts; and a calm perusal of the history of English statesmanship forces to the disagreeable conclusion that there has been a persistent lowering of both the moral and technical standard as time has passed. It is necessary to make it clear that in this generalization only the men at the top of the political ladder are considered. One is comparing the First Ministers of the Middle Ages with the First Ministers of to-day: or, one might say, the King's Council of the past with the present Cabinet. It is probable that there is as much, if not more, efficiency and honesty in the average public servant to-day than there ever was. The criticism is of that purely political class which is the peculiar product of the modern period. To take an extreme case: is there anyone in the modern period (since Burghley) who can equal Alfred the Great in the breadth of his statesmanship? Professor Oman has written: "Looking up and down the ages there is no one but St. Louis of France who can be compared to Alfred. . . . Truly this Alfred was no mere national hero, no ordinary 'patron of arts and letters,' but a man of great ideas, a figure of transcendent energy." "Alfred made history . . . what he accomplished was never undone." The man who had to save his country from being plundered by a race of pirates, who were on the verge of capturing all England for their permanent home, was also the man who laid the foundation of the English State and its social machinery. To quote Professor Oman again: "This great fighter and administrator was not merely the victorious general of a dozen campaigns, the founder of a navy, the rebuilder of the internal organization of Church and State, but also a scholar and author ; one who loved alike the old national poetry of his own race and the literature of Rome." Those were not days when statesmen made speeches. There is naturally a healthy sense of the importance of deeds not words when an enemy is on the point of burning one out of home and fields ; so perhaps it was the Danes who taught Alfred to be practical. Anyhow, " The moment he had the power and the leisure, Alfred set to work to collect about him the few scholars who were yet to be found in England . . . and would always contrive to have one of them at his side, for at every spare moment of night or day he wished to have books read to him, Latin or English." Let the reader allow his mind to turn suddenly to the present politicians, when they also have just been relieved from the urgent peril of a foreign conquest. Are they surrounded by the wise men of the land ? But the record of Alfred must be read in detail if one is to understand the essential fact that he was a statesman who was rich in practical deeds, and not a politician skilled in rhetorical generalizations. It is one of the main distinctions between the statesman of the old school and the new.

It would be easy to take other great figures from the earlier governors of England and compare them with the men of like position in the modern period. For example, set down such couples as St. Anselm and Mr. Gladstone ; Simon de Montford and Mr. Canning ; Wolsey and Chatham ; Burghley and the Younger Pitt ; Edward I and Sir Robert Peel ; Edward IV and George IV ; Edmund Rich with all the Archbishops of Canterbury since Reginald Pole ; Sir Thomas More with all the Chancellors of England after him. Let there be every admission that there are many exceptional cases on both sides of the line. There were innumerable political adventurers and dishonest officials during the mediæval period ; and there have been dozens of hard-working, wholly good-intentioned men who have governed England since. We have but to mention such men as Peter of Savoy and Warwick the Kingmaker to remember that the earlier days were splattered with the mud of self-seekers; while John Eliot and Lord Palmerston may remind us that in the modern period honest gentlemen still went into politics, even though they did not always take much intelligence with them. But it is suggested that an impartial weighing of the evidence forces us to the conclusion that the general standard has declined. William Cecil, Lord Burghley, was the last English Prime Minister who was at once a man of long views, an expert administrator, and an entirely honest man who always thought of his country's welfare before his own ambition. It is interesting to note that this Cecil stock of honest political craftsmen, although it continued in the direct line, disappeared from the public political stage during the ignoble and incompetent self-seeking of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with their Whig oligarchy and all-parties' plutocracy. The Cecil traditions apparently could not live in such an atmosphere. When the direct line has again emerged with the revolt against "modern" statesmanship, it is worth considering that the descendants of Elizabeth's great Minister are gradually impressing themselves on the nation as being of those few members of the Houses of Parliament who have any principles or moral convictions beyond the selfish expediency of the moment. It is a valuable survival of the older traditions of statesmanship. It may be the beginning of a return to a system when statesmen had not degenerated into politicians; when they did not start their public careers with the words that the young Canning—that most typical of modern governors—wrote of the House of Commons when he was eighteen: "The only path to the only desirable thing in this world—the gratification of ambition." It would be no exaggeration to say that such a sentence has been the very breath of modern statesmen; and it has been followed to its logical conclusion with a selfishness that would have made even Thomas Wolsey hesitate. A lower order of mind has got possession of the trade of governing. Ambition may have its virtuous side: but there are worse things than ambition at the foundation of modern politics. There is the sinister purpose to use political and administrative machinery to serve the interests of individuals and classes. Politics has become the trade of managing the State in the interests of the men in possession and their friends. Modern statesmen are so rarely judicial administrators—they are very interested partisans. Perhaps half of them are sincerely trying to do their best for the State—judging by the results, they must therefore be very incompetent persons.

OLIVER CROMWELL

(1599–1658)

It is somewhat strange, at the first glance, that the Commons of the British Parliament allowed two hundred and fifty years to pass before they raised a monument in memory of the man to whom (if popular rumour can be believed) they owed their firm existence among our national institutions. If it were really true that Oliver Cromwell saved Parliament from a despotic dynasty that was bent on its destruction, then it would seem only common courtesy to acknowledge the deliverer in some conspicuous part of their House. But Parliament, the symbol, we are told, of the freedom of the people, hesitated. At last, in the closing years of the nineteenth century, a private gentleman (with a distinctively foreign name) ventured to suggest that, being the happy possessor of a contemporary bust of the Protector, he would gladly offer it to the nation, that it might be set up as a memorial in the precincts of the House of Commons. The Liberal Government in office at the moment apparently felt a sense of embarrassment: at least it did not accept the gift. The donor waited; and when a Tory Government came into power he renewed the offer. It was accepted. A Cabinet formed by the Marquis of Salisbury, a direct descendant of that Cecil who had been the First Minister of the Stuart dynasty, felt able with propriety to commemorate an English statesman whom a Ministry chosen by Mr. Gladstone had hesitated to acknowledge. There was a good reason for this paradoxical proceeding; and the reason is the clue to Oliver Cromwell's life.

By one of those uncontrolled gusts of fancy, beginning one scarcely knows where or how, the tale was started that

Cromwell saved English liberty from the assault of despotically minded men like Strafford and his kind. The truth is very different. If it must be stated in a sentence—which is impossible, with justice—then it would be truest to say that Cromwell entirely agreed with the manner of Strafford's work. He completed it. He gave England an absolute central government. He succeeded where Strafford had failed. The fact that the one owned Charles Stuart for his master and the other looked to Parliament is of comparatively small importance as a matter of political science. Strafford wanted supreme power in order that he might rule England for the good of Englishmen. Cromwell sought the same supremacy, and (complex though his character was, and hard to understand with any certainty) even the uncharitable as a rule are ready to admit that his end was as unselfish as Strafford's. They were not self-seekers in that vulgar sense which is perhaps the commonest mark of the trade of governing men. They were ambitious of power: they rank among the great despots of history; but neither of them used his power for personally selfish ends. Indeed, one was so unselfish that he gave his life in exchange for his ambition. The essential fact which is common to both is that they tried to be absolute, with the power of enforcing whatever orders they gave. They were both tyrants—however amiable and altruistic. Strafford was the more timid of the two: he never executed a Parliamentary leader or drove a House of Commons out by armed force. Cromwell did both these distinctively autocratic deeds—the latter he repeated several times. Strafford threatened to bring an army from Ireland to put down resistance. Cromwell went much further than threats: he formed the first great standing army that this free land had seen, and spent the rest of his life in ruling England by that army's strong arm. Little wonder that the members of the House of Commons hesitated to set up his monument in their halls.

After a few years of the rule of the democrat Oliver Cromwell and his officers, the people of England fell on the neck of the returning Stuart in an ecstasy of joy. They looked back on Cromwell's career with horror—for he had succeeded in doing what they had only feared Strafford might do. It was not merely that both had demanded absolute power and had appealed to armed force. For a nation is not easily shocked by that, seeing that most of the history of government in the world is the story of applied or threatened force. To call a man who uses force a scoundrel would be absurd; for such an assumption would put half the statesmen of the world into the criminal dock. But what England was entitled (and able) to judge was the use of the power when it was won. Without venturing into high philosophical arguments as to the ultimate sanctions of government—whether force or persuasion was its foundation—the people of England had strong, common-sense ideas on the question whether Cromwell's rule was more successful (that is, more agreeable) than Strafford's. Whatever the historians have had to say on the matter—and they have been writing and talking ever since—less informed (but more practically minded) Englishmen have continued to declare that the rule of the Puritans and Cromwell was a far from pleasant event, which they do not want repeated. They have had a national jealousy of a standing army ever since; and very few reasonable men have troubled, since Cromwell's great experiment, to propose republicanism as a remedy for social ills. If anyone suggests a republic to-day, one may be fairly sure that his elementary knowledge of history does not get as far as the period of the Puritan Revolution of the seventeenth century.

Whether Cromwell was a good or a bad statesman might seem easily decided by considering the facts of his own life. But there are few men for whose measurement we are more dependent on comparison with others. The greatest event of his career was when he cut off Charles Stuart's head. Now, before it is possible to judge of the value of that act, it is obviously necessary first to know what was in that head. In other words, before deciding whether Cromwell was doing the best thing for England in killing the King, we must judge that King and his policy—and the proceedings must be of a more impartial kind than the drumhead court-martial that sat in Westminster Hall in 1649. Cromwell and his friends may have had as admirable intentions as they declared themselves to have: but it is necessary to come to some conclusion as to whether Charles's intentions were as good or better than their own; and, far more important than any pious intention, it is all-important to compare Charles's facts with Cromwell's facts; to place what Charles had done beside what Cromwell did. We shall have to discuss motives somewhat fully, because Cromwell was one of those rather wearisome creatures who talk much of their inner life and their good and bad intents. But it must never be forgotten that in history the accomplished fact is usually more important than the best of desires.

Of course, it was not a matter between Charles and Cromwell as individuals. They merely summed up the cases for their respective sides; and the questions at issue between them were some of the most momentous in English history. There are all kinds of smaller interesting problems: whether Charles was an unscrupulous liar or a martyr; whether Oliver was a saint or a hypocritical intriguer. But such can be answered at leisure or left undecided. The main points in dispute can be summed up in the wide generalization that Charles and Cromwell fought to decide whether England should be governed by a Monarch or by a Middle Class. Put in another way, it might be said that the question was whether the nation should be Old England or Modern England. Charles was the last flicker of anything that might be truthfully called mediæval in our history—though most of it had already disappeared under the remodelling hand of the Tudors. Still, it was not altogether too late. If Charles Stuart had won, England might have slowly developed with much of the main structure of the Middle Ages left; as there were many traces left in Russia and Hungary and Austria before the recent war; as there are, indeed, traces left almost everywhere in Europe, except in this land that was swept by Cromwells and Chathams. Even in centralized republican France they have still one great mark of mediævalism, the peasant proprietor.

Cromwell, as against Charles, stood for all those new developments which were to make England modern. If he won—and he did win, in spite of the Restoration—then it was inevitable that the last hope of Old England had gone, and for generations it was committed to the new ways. Cromwell's victory decided that plutocracy was to have its chance; and we had the Whig oligarchy of the eighteenth century, and the very slightly different industrial plutocracy of the nineteenth century, as the natural sequence of the Puritan victory of the seventeenth century. Cromwell was the symbol of the new Middle Class of traders; that is, the merchants and manufacturers of the towns, and the country gentry of the agricultural districts. It was a struggle between a Crown that represented, on the whole, the nation, and a privileged class which mainly (and naturally) represented itself. There were all sorts of side issues, such as religion and class pride. But in the main, it was a fight between Charles as the champion of a mediæval theory of government and Cromwell as the expounder of a new theory; so new, indeed, that it had not expressed itself in any concise terms.

When the Tudors had ruled England for a hundred years, the older mediæval system of classes had been crushed almost beyond recall—the King was left, the Roman Church and the nobles had gone. In the Middle Ages there had certainly been a central government for the nation; but if we moderns could suddenly return to those days we would think that the State scarcely existed, or even that it had been abolished altogether. Compared with the central government of to-day, it might be said that there was scarcely any at all in the full prime of the Plantagenets. Then social law was mainly a matter of local courts and local customs, of guilds and manors; although the King and his courts and his officers were a continually growing factor. Yet even when the Tudors began their work of centralization, governing affairs were in the main conducted by Englishmen for themselves, and not by the King's officers for them. The Tudors laid the foundations and the skeleton framework for a strong central government which was to control England from Westminster. But they left it undecided as to what form that government should take. The Tudors had paid more heed to their personal Ministers, to Thomas Wolsey, to the Cecils and Walsingham, than to their Parliaments; and it might be added that they sometimes paid more attention to their own will than to either. When the Stuarts came to London as kings they brought with them, being Scotsmen, a whole bagful of philosophical and theological theories, which suddenly precipitated the main problems of government; when a less argumentative race might have allowed the whole matter to slumber and mature for many generations, and then reach a quiet solution. But the Stuarts were full of theories; and their subjects at that precise moment were unusually full of facts. The result was the Civil War and Oliver Cromwell.

It has been said the subjects were unusually full of facts. This is intended in a very definite sense: for the merchant class of England had suddenly found their coffers and warehouses full of riches and goods. In the Middle Ages, society had done without the middle classes as they had come to exist in the days of the early Stuarts. To give one illustration of this factor: the East India Company was chartered in the last years of Elizabeth; it was one of the first clear signs of the arrival of the great British commercial magnates. In short, at the precise moment that the argumentative Scottish kings arrived, the merchants found themselves a powerful class. When the Stuarts said they were supreme governors, by divine right, the merchants took up the challenge. They were beginning to hold the wealth of England; when the Crown asked for a revenue, the merchants did not want to pay, and demanded a share in the government, hoping thereby that they could make someone else pay the taxes. The Crown in the old days, when agricultural land was the main form of wealth, had "lived of its own"; that is, it had supported the burden of government out of the royal manors and the royal dues, with the help of a few simple custom duties and a light direct subsidy to make up the balance when a war was on. But when the Tudors made the functions of the State so much wider in scope, and when the Stuarts continued the process by developing the royal courts of administration and justice, the Crown had to ask for a larger revenue. It was not an unreasonable demand, for it was doing much more work. Besides this, the great rise in prices (owing to American silver and other causes) made the royal rents even less than they seemed on paper.

The Great Civil War was fought over the question: Who should pay for the increasing expenses of English government? The question as to who should rule came up in a secondary manner. It is not without good reason that the schoolboy believes that the war was fought to decide whether John Hampden should be compelled to pay shipmoney to King Charles. That was the starting-point; though the matters in dispute developed with great rapidity directly the first problem was raised. It is an unfortunate fact that the Great Civil War was not the pure-souled struggle for English freedom that the more imaginative of the historians would have us believe. It was, on the contrary, mainly conducted on the Parliamentary side by a rather sordid set of self-interested persons who either wanted to save their purses or, still worse, saw their chance of a successful career as political adventurers. There are great exceptions to this serious charge, and Oliver Cromwell is one of them—but of that it will be more possible to judge after analysing his deeds. And there was a great deal of self-interest on the side of the Court, though perhaps less than on the side of the Parliamentarians. But take it all in all, the Civil War was not a struggle between a disaffected and outraged people and a despotic King. It was conducted on both sides by comparatively small groups of self-interested men; while the bulk of the nation looked on with apathy or disgust—which is the popular feeling about most revolutions. When the fighting began there were frantic efforts on the part of whole districts and counties to declare themselves neutral—just as peaceful and respectable people in everyday life try to pretend they do not notice when drunken parties begin to quarrel. The vast majority of the English people would willingly have stood outside the Civil War; partly because they did not know what it was all about, and partly because they had a shrewd notion that it was six of one and half a dozen of the other—which homely verdict is the strictly scientific explanation of the majority of the great political squabbles which are discussed with such solemnity in the history-books.

The sole question which could interest the people as a whole was whether Charles Stuart and his men would rule England more agreeably than John Pym and Hampden and Cromwell. Was a king's government worse than a parliament's? Enthusiastic democrats have jumped to the hasty conclusion that it is a matter of common sense that does not admit of argument. They assume, almost as a matter of arithmetic, that five hundred men must inevitably be more democratic than one; and clinch the argument by pointing out that the five hundred had been elected by the freemen of the nation. The theory shows a primitive innocency of the way in which public affairs are conducted. A little historical research reveals that the Civil War was in great part organized by Mr. John Pym and a small group of gentlemen who met in the City of London to further their own financial interests, and discovered that political intrigue was the best method of getting what they wanted. They cannot be said to have represented popular opinion; they rather manufactured it to represent themselves. Those enthusiastic mobs that rushed to the doors of the Houses of Parliament, to influence their voting, were said by the Royalists—with good evidence behind their statements—to have been produced by Pym and his friends in the same manner that a theatrical manager produces a show on the stage. But whether the Parliamentary case was "produced," or a free rising of the people, is a less important matter than discovering the intention of the Parliamentarians when they had obtained the supreme power for which they fought.

One can learn more about their motives by studying, for example, the story of this "Company of the Adventurers for the Plantations of the Islands of Providence, Henrietta, and the adjacent Islands" (of which Mr. Pym was the inspiring secretary) than by reading any number of parliamentary speeches and petitions of right. The members gave the Earl of Holland one full share in the Company without payment, in return for the kind trouble he had taken in getting concessions out of Government officials. Nothing could be more typical of the attitude of the Parliamentarians. They were gentlemen with a keen eye for their personal business; and they realized, almost for the first time in our history, that government could be made a convenient tool for ambitious commercial men. They were not all like that: Sir Thomas Eliot died in the Tower, after three years' harsh imprisonment, rather than retract one word of his political faith. For it was a faith in his case, not a business convenience. But of the men who went to prison with him for defying the King, most apologized and said they were sorry. There was Hampden, who had also the courage to die for his convictions. And there were men who signed Charles's death-warrant at the risk of their own necks out of sheer conviction that they were doing justice. But the greater part of the Puritan revolutionaries were less interested in their faith than their profits. As Dr. Cunningham, the greatest of English economic historians, has sarcastically written: "Their attachment to their principles was not adequately tested by a contest which was the occasion of improving the fortunes of so many." He also has written a criticism of the Long Parliament, which our schoolchildren are taught to consider as the brave body that saved us from constitutional slavery: "The Long Parliament attained an unfortunate notoriety for the worst forms of political corruption. . . . Parliament, by the confiscation of Crown and Ecclesiastical lands, threw an immense amount of real estate into the market, and some of the members were enabled to become purchasers at very low rates. Lenthall, the Speaker of the House of Commons, did not set an example of uprightness. Oliver Cromwell earned the gratitude of honest citizens by evicting the gang of unscrupulous politicians who were plotting to prolong their tenure of authority." It was at this time that Lady Verney wrote in a letter to a friend: "Everyone tells me there is no hope of doing anything in the House of Commons except by bribery"—so she gave £50 to the Speaker's sister-in-law.

There was one earnest supporter of the Parliamentary cause, a Robert Spavin, who was a secretary to Oliver Cromwell. We find this instructive person writing to Clarke, in November 1648, of "that old jog-trot form of government by King, Lords and Commons. No matter how or by whom, sure I am it cannot be worse if honest men have the managing of it, and noe matter whether they be greate or noe. . . . The Lord is about a greate worke, such as will stumble many meane-principled men. . . ." Spavin was afterwards caught forging Cromwell's signature to passes and protections, in which this secretary was doing a thriving trade: and he closed his career in Puritan history by riding through the City of London with a large placard on back and front, explaining the nature of his crime. It is regrettable to think that Spavin was perhaps more truly representative of the Puritan Rebellion than his master ever was.

And yet Cromwell, had he been built for the part, could not have more completely summed up in his family history the Middle Classes that made the Civil War. Thomas Cromwell, the chief of the gang of professional thieves who burgled the property of the monasteries in the Tudor period (under the thin disguise of "reforming" the Church), had a sister Katherine, who married a rich brewer of Putney, Morgan Williams. Their son, Richard, to quote the somewhat generous words of Mr. Firth, "assisted his uncle in his dealings with refractory Churchmen." Like many other men who have soiled their fingers and their souls by dirty work, he got his reward. The priory of Hinchinbrook and the abbey of Ramsey and some of its manors became the property of this Richard Williams, who showed his great respect for his uncle by adopting the surname of Cromwell. It would be impossible to sum up more concisely both the real meaning of the Reformation and the origin of the new Middle Classes of the merchants and landed gentry, who founded themselves in English history on the spoils of the destroyed Church. Richard's son became Sir Henry Cromwell, "the golden knight," who built Hinchinbrook House, wherein he entertained Queen Elizabeth, and spent his great wealth in assisting his sovereign in maintaining "the sincere religion of Christ" and protesting against "the devilish superstition of the Pope." There were obvious reasons why the man who held a priory and an abbey should not want the Roman religion restored; and the same reason held good in hundreds of like cases throughout England. It was a large part of the reason that made the landed gentry of England so patriotic in defending their country against the Armada peril; and it founded that traditional dread of Popery which was the basis of the Puritan Roundheads and the Hanoverian Whigs. For generations after the Reformation the policy of England was mainly dictated by the gentlemen who were in possession of the lands which had been seized from the Roman Church. It was the foundation of our earnest Protestant faith.

Robert Cromwell, a son of Sir Henry, succeeded to one of his father's new estates, and sat in the Elizabethan Parliament to keep watch over the maintenance of that Protestant faith which was his title-deed. He married into a similar family that had also got its share of the ecclesiastical spoils; while his two sisters became the mothers of Whalley the regicide and John Hampden respectively. He himself was the father of Oliver. A simple family story of this kind will save much laborious searching after the causes of the Civil War and later events in our national history. It shows why Oliver Cromwell so significantly represented the men who opposed Charles Stuart; he was the great-great-grandson of the wealthy brewer of Putney, whose son became a county gentleman by grants of Church lands. To make his position quite certain, Oliver married Elizabeth Bourchier, the daughter of a wealthy City knight who had made a fortune in furs and then set up as a country gentleman in Essex. In other words, Cromwell represented at the same time the rich trading class and the new landed gentry into which the traders had blossomed during the Tudor period. This is not a far-fetched symbol; Cromwell was not an exception; he was the fair type of his party. It is an altogether significant fact that there were thirty-one members of the Long Parliament who were related to him by blood and by marriage.

Yet, in spite of Cromwell's family history, and the almost miraculous way in which it sums up the case of his party, the truth is that Cromwell was the least symbolic figure in the whole gallery of portraits of the Puritan leaders. He apparently really desired to give England good government; he was not anxious to get good bargains in confiscated lands. He certainly accepted from Parliament a grant of the valuable lands of the Marquis of Worcester; but he would not have been a human creature if he had been so modest as to refuse any reward after his astounding services to his party. But, more important than these points, he was not a believer in a parliamentary system, like Eliot and Pym and Hampden. It is the supreme paradox of Cromwell's career. Of course, he would not have risen in the House and said so: but one day when the Earl of Manchester (a real Parliamentary Puritan) got angry with Cromwell, he revealed in the Lords what Oliver had whispered in his ear quite early in the war: "My lord, if you will stick firm to honest men you shall find yourself at the head of an army which shall give law both to King and Parliament." The noble lord might have persuaded himself to become general of a despotic army; but what annoyed him was that Cromwell "has even ventured to tell me that it will never be well with England till I were Mr. Montague and there was ne'er a lord or peer in the kingdom." What Cromwell said to Lord Manchester about an army was almost word for word what Strafford had whispered to Charles—and had been beheaded by the Parliament men for saying. If Strafford and Cromwell had not taken different sides they would have been the closest of colleagues. But then, bitter wars are rarely fought because the rivals disagree, but rather because they both want the same thing. In this case Cromwell and Strafford both wanted absolute power, and both thought that an army was the quickest way to get what they wanted.

There was another matter where Cromwell did not represent this Puritan party. He did not bully the poorer people and make money by stealing their lands. On the contrary, his earliest fame was won by protecting them. In 1630 he was defending the common rights of the burgesses of Huntingdon, and made "disgraceful and unseemly speaches" to the mayor on the subject. When he moved to the Eastern counties, Cromwell soon earned the local nickname of "Lord of the Fens" for his defence of the commoners who were losing their rights owing to the reclaiming schemes of that earnest Puritan, the Earl of Bedford, one of the "Adventurers" and a friend of Pym. But it was really that despotic person King Charles who came to the assistance of the commoners in this particular attack by democratic Parliamentarians. Cromwell was again on the popular side when the Earl of Manchester, the Puritan peer already mentioned, seized the common lands of Somersham, near St. Ives. Manchester used his parliamentary influence, and the trained bands were sent to maintain him in possession; whereupon Cromwell persuaded the House of Commons to appoint a committee to hear the case: and his appearance before that body "was so tempestuous and his behaviour so insolent" that he became one of the recognized defenders of the peasant class against the new rich who were buying up England out of their trading profits.

In all these ways Cromwell, the leader of the Puritan Rebellion, was paradoxically unlike his party. But perhaps he stands apart from the Puritan party above all in that he believed in the Puritan creed; in his case it was not a political convenience or a mere family tradition. His religion was the chief foundation of his character. It sounds somewhat a ranting, hysterical thing in modern ears; and in its more emotional moments it almost seems to ring untrue. Yet, taken as a whole, it must be accepted as a historical fact that Cromwell's religion was deep and sincere, and that it affected almost every moment of his public life. We shall often have to believe this at the expense of Cromwell's reputation as a man of intellect: but that will increase our respect for him as an artist and poet and mystic. It is perhaps as a psychological study that this man is most interesting. If he had not chanced to get an immense (and unearned) reputation as a statesman, he would still have remained as a great example of that most alluring of all studies—the human mind. What are we to make of a man who won battles by first-class strategy and tactics and by the nerve-power of personal physical courage, and then wrote his despatches explaining them in the terms of a Methodist parson?. What can we make of a man who professed to be fighting for the liberty of the English to do and to think what they pleased, and yet gave orders for Irish boys and girls to be seized as if they were cattle and shipped to the West Indies to stock the land as one would stock a farmyard? What is to be said of a statesman who refused to listen to French proposals for an alliance until they had stopped the persecution of the Vaudois, and yet allowed his own troops in Ireland to hang priests in cold blood, and cut their throats during the heat of assaults? There was no man who could enforce discipline so masterfully as Cromwell; what his army did was exactly what he allowed it to do. How can we measure a man who killed a king for being a despot, and then ruled England, until the day he died, by the sword? It is fairly clear that it will not be easy to find any psychological generalizations wide enough to cover such a case.

Cromwell has succeeded in misleading most of the people who have tried to make him intelligible: but that is because they have attempted to build up a figure of perfectly logical parts. In any ordinary sense of the term, he was not logical; and he only becomes plausible when we realize that his greatest gift was not his power to outwit his enemies, but a capacity for deceiving and outwitting himself. He was a great soldier, a man of great intellect, but before all else he was a consummmate actor of the highly strung emotional sort; a man who could have roused the gallery at every cheap theatre, where they like their emotions served somewhat hot. He could ride a passion with such fury that he could convince himself that it was a real fact. He could even convince himself against the facts. And for a work such as Cromwell had to do, the capacity for self-deception must have been very comforting and helpful. The man who saw the facts as they were would quickly have got disheartened; his enthusiasm would have dried up when he discovered that he represented a rather sordid and selfish class, and that the men on the other side were as good, or better, than those on his own.

Cromwell was an emotionalist who also possessed an extraordinarily good intellect. It is always a powerful combination, and he is one of the clearest examples of it. His life was a continual balancing of the one side against the other. But the emotions usually won; for although his brain was of marvellous working qualities, yet it was of comparatively small range. Cromwell had not the breadth of vision and of thought that hampers so many men's careers. Half the doubts and hesitations that hold them up to think—until they are lost—never troubled Cromwell at all. When he was perplexed he fell back on his dreams, and his dreams generally had their convincing way. That he was above all a man of emotions is proved by the story of his early years of religious doubts. Cromwell was so amazingly clever as a political schemer and as a soldier, that one is tempted to forget that the foundation of the whole man was a half-mad religious mysticism, which unkind observers would have been justified in describing as a mania. His medical men called it melancholia, and ranked it with other nervous complaints. In the year 1628, when Cromwell went up to London to sit in his first parliamentary session, the Court physician, Sir Theodore Mayerne, made this note in his diary: "For Mons. Cromwell valde melancholicus." It suggests something sour in the psychological world; and had Cromwell remained a simple farmer, he would doubtless have been a somewhat tedious neighbour. But his career as a soldier, and then as the master of England, took him out of his narrow self, where it might have been his fate to live. But there is no denying the terrors of those early attacks; when, panic-stricken by the dread of death, he would call up the Huntingdon doctors "at midnight and such unseasonable hours, very many times," as one of them wrote. Between 1628 and 1636 Cromwell's soul was a seething vessel of moral conflict. One of his friends told how religion was "laid into his soul with the hammer and fire"; and the sufferer himself described his victory over evil with all the ecstatic enthusiasm of a Salvation Army convert: "I lived in and loved darkness, and hated light; I was a chief, the chief of sinners. . . . My soul is with the Congregation of the Firstborn, my body rests in hope. . . . He giveth me to see light in His light."

It is of the greatest historical importance to know that at the moment of the outbreak of war between King and Parliament, Cromwell, the cleverest soldier in the kingdom, went into action with the calm, if enthusiastic, assurance of one who has just come to an entirely satisfactory agreement with the Creator of the Universe. To come to terms with the King of England, after such a treaty with his God, was not likely to trouble the Parliamentary soldier. During the rest of his career he continued to assume (to the verge of boredom) that he was always acting as the servant of the Lord. It was asserted so persistently, and with so childlike a touch, that it is almost impossible to think that Cromwell ever doubted the great truth of his mission as the agent of God. At the moment of his "conversion" he had devoted himself to the service of his newly found Master: "If here I may honour my God, either by doing or suffering, I shall be most glad. Truly no poor creature hath more cause to put himself forth in the cause of God than I have." So it came about that Cromwell became a Puritan leader with a personal sense of religious conviction which could only be matched with William Laud's and gentle George Herbert's—and they were on the other side. It would be fairly safe to say that none of the leaders took their faith as seriously as Cromwell did. If it was really a "Puritan Revolution," then Oliver and the handful of his troopers were the most serious believers—while the rest of the revolutionaries had more material and more private designs of their own.

It was when he turned to the greatest work of his life, the building of the "New Model" Army, that Cromwell displayed the complexity of his character, and showed that the most unbalanced of religious mystics could be the hardest-headed and the clearest thinker, and the most active of doers that England could produce in that turmoil of violent action and assertive thought. His new army expressed Cromwell's two sides, his mysticism and his realism; and made them into a whole which became something remarkably near a miracle. He had soon detected the weakness of the ordinary soldiers of the Parliamentary army, with which Essex was attempting (or not attempting) to crush Charles. Mr. Firth, the first authority on the period, thus sums up Essex's army: some of his "foot regiments were excellent, but the ranks of his cavalry were filled with men attracted solely by high pay and opportunities of plunder." These were undoubtedly worthy representatives of the group of political adventurers who were fighting as earnestly for offices and spoils in political circles as Essex's cavalry fought for plunder on the battlefield. But these, the politicians and the cavalrymen, were not of the stuff that builds up a new nation: and Cromwell was simple-minded enough to imagine that a new national heart was not beyond reach of serious men. It was that for which he was fighting.

Cromwell once told one of his colonels (who had grumbled at the appointment of a praying captain): "I think that he that prays and preaches best will fight best." It was one of those remarks that seem thoroughly stupid in print. It was on the field of battle that it proved entirely true. Cromwell's theory of psalm-singing soldiers gave him the finest army in England; just as the religious mania of their leader helped to make him supreme among the common herd of politicians with whom he passed so much of his career. There is little doubt that, had it not been for Cromwell and his army, the Great Rebellion would soon have flickered out in indecision—perhaps a happier result than its fight to a bitter end. The Earls of Essex and Manchester, and their like, never intended to do anything serious to the constitution of England; and they were alarmed when they found they had raised a bigger storm than they could ride. They had never meant to win freedom for anybody but themselves; and these "Levellers," who talked indiscreetly of "all men," were regarded as a warning. Anyhow, Cromwell and his troopers gave the Great Rebellion a moral tone. Whereas, if Pym had continued to lead, it would have been little more than a legal argument and a squabble to decide who should pay the taxes. Cromwell at least raised it to the level of a sincere chapel meeting—which is better than the atmosphere of constitutional lawyers and bank directors. It was this religious conviction which put Cromwell and his troopers on top, and left all the unconvinced (and unconvincing) littler men underneath. Clarendon (with that broadminded sanity which usually distinguished the Royalists from the narrower Puritans) summed up the position of the rival armies in this way: the King's he calls "a dissolute, undisciplined, wicked, beaten army"; Cromwell's "an army whose order and discipline, whose sobriety and manners, whose courage and success hath made it famous and terrible in the world."

If it was Cromwell's religious creed that made his army and his power, it was exactly the same religion that ruined his cause. For it was a dark and joyless faith. Englishmen would have borne a lot of economic and political tyranny from either Charles or Pym; but they refused to have their lives turned into an everlasting Sunday-school class to suit the tastes of a few persistent persons who were suffering from enlargement of the moral organs. Puritanism and Independency were the very best of creeds to take into battle; but for domestic purposes a brighter, more human, belief was necessary. England might have borne with Cromwell's major-generals; but when sour-minded Prynnes got hysterical because there were such things as actors and long curls and health-drinking in the land, then nobody was very indignant because Charles Stuart's despotic government chopped off his ears for his stupidity. Later on, when he abused Laud's ecclesiastical policy, they chopped off what was left of the stumps—and this time there was popular sympathy for him. But that was because by this time England had come to associate Laud with the restoration of Roman Catholicism—so the gentlemen who held Church estates were getting nervous about their title-deeds; and Prynne became a useful pillar of the Puritan party. It was the dismalness of their lives more than their political practices that made Cromwell and his friends intolerable and brought back Charles.

If the Puritans had won, England would have been put outside the circle of European culture. Moral degenerates who put their swords through stained-glass windows and suppressed Sunday pastimes lest they should make men happy would soon have reduced their nation to barbarism. The difference between the Churchman Herbert, who loved everything that was beautiful and charitable, and the monomaniac Prynne, who loathed all that was charming and generous, was the difference between civilization and savagery. Here, again, Cromwell did not truly represent his party—but it was just that he should suffer with the dogmas that he himself seated in power. He was never so small a man as to be afraid of the pleasure of life; and there are signs that a few more years of power in Whitehall would have broadened his mind still more. He was always fond of music and social recreations: he was a healthy country gentleman who loved a good horse and a skilful hawk. When his daughter Frances was married from the palace, "they had forty-eight violins and much mirth with frolic, besides mixed dancing (a thing before accounted profane) till five of the clock yesterday morning." And for Mary's wedding at Hampton Court, Marvell wrote some songs and put Oliver in them as Jove—a far from decent proceeding in the house of a strictly orthodox religious maniac.

Just as we have seen that Cromwell's religious faith might fairly be called the foundation of his military career, so also with perfect historical accuracy it may be said that it was his chief asset in political life. It can scarcely be believed that Cromwell would have had the moral nerve to turn out objectionable Parliaments by force if he had not felt an intense conviction of supernatural support. Here are the words with which he dismissed the Parliament of 1654, having first filled the City with troops and placed armed men over the House: "I think myself bound, as in my duty to God, and to the people of these nations for their safety and good in every respect—I think it my duty to tell you that it is not for the profit of these nations, nor for common and public good, for you to continue here any longer." That has the ring of inner conviction, and not merely the bluffing of a political adventurer. And whenever he quotes God as his main supporter—and he was continually doing so—on the whole he convinces us that he meant it, and that it was indeed the all-important factor in his policy. Of course, sometimes he made himself very ridiculous: as when, for example, on the surrender by Colonel Windebank of Blechington House, Cromwell's official despatch ran: "This was the mercy of God, and nothing is more due than a real acknowledgment. And though I have had greater mercies, yet none clearer. . . . I hope you will pardon me if I say, God is not enough owned. We look too much to men and visible helps." Whereas the truth of the matter was that Windebank had just married, and was having such a delightful honeymoon that he could not be bothered by fighting. It was a dangerous faith that read the greatness of God into all the weaknesses of men. But take it all in all, Cromwell's religion was blended with the world in a remarkably successful manner.

What was Cromwell's political theory? What was his policy? The truest answer would be to say that he had none. A few moments' thought will show that there should be no reason for surprise that such was his position. For when the struggle with the King definitely commenced, Oliver had shown no signs of any particular bent for public life. We have seen that his early characteristic was religious melancholy, and he was more occupied in saving his soul than the nation. By one of those strange chances that become important, this religious chaos ended by making Cromwell the best recruiting officer in England; and he found himself at the head of the picked division of the Parliamentary army. It was partly his artist's eye for the reality of facts—the capacity of seeing things as they are—on a field of battle; partly the great driving force of his religious convictions, which had now taken the place of his doubts; partly his native superiority of brain; all together these made Cromwell the finest soldier in England. During a civil war the finest soldier quite naturally soon finds himself the commander of the nation: and so it happened in this case.

Cromwell suddenly found himself faced with the problem of governing the nation he had conquered in the field. It was an embarrassing situation, and Cromwell never mastered the problem or escaped from the embarrassment. On the day he died he seems to have been still without any definite policy for the government of England. He had always been living from hand to mouth; faced with a daily practical fact which might well have driven all theory out of his head. The urgent daily question was how to keep in power—how, even, to protect himself from being murdered by the Royalists, or by the fanatical democrats who began to think that Cromwell was standing between them and the Fifth Monarchy of the Saints. Cromwell began politics with the elementary desire to crush his Royalist opponents on the battlefield: he ended his career with the still more elementary desire to keep himself from being crushed again by the enemy he had once beaten—and still more difficult was the work of surviving the attacks of the men who had fought to place him in power. It was not really a political problem at all, in the sense of a plan of social construction. It was almost a purely personal puzzle. As a matter of fact, Cromwell was clearly convinced that he was struggling for the good of England, of which he sincerely believed he was the most useful servant. But he was, nevertheless, a servant who had no time to attend to the most important household duties, because he was compelled to spend his whole time clinging to the roof to prevent its being blown off by the gale. Such an urgent necessity was far from conducive to methodical study of political and economic laws.

Oliver Cromwell certainly had great practical wisdom. There was little that anyone could tell him concerning the mind of man that he had not already fathomed with one of his penetrating glances. Careful observers noted that he had a wonderful way of gathering information from others without revealing his own opinions—the most dangerous of all the gifts by which a politician can strike his prey. This capacity for common-sense and practical insight gave Cromwell the power to solve the day-by-day problems, as they arose, with considerable success. But to face the facts—instead of the high philosophy with which some of the historians have concealed Cromwell—the chief concern of this statesman was to persuade the army to keep loyal and to turn out whatever Parliament the Protector ordered them to push through the doors of Westminster. Cromwell began as a military policeman and he ended as one.

This man who set out to crush the King because Charles was a despot, found, when he had to act as chief governor of England himself, that the only way to proceed was by calling his soldiers into the House whenever he failed to convert the members by logic. As early as August 1647 we find Cromwell dictating to the Commons (with twenty thousand men behind him) who should sit in their House; and the objectionable members had to leave on his orders. Of course, Cromwell at this time was not in official control of the army; but it was his creation, and Fairfax was practically the follower, not the superior, of his lieutenant. The next year came Pride's Purge, when a hundred and forty of those who were left of the Long Parliament were driven away by armed men, leaving a Rump of about fifty members. Cromwell said he did not know of this until it was done —which was probably a lie—" but since it was done he was glad of it, and would endeavour to maintain it." When the driven members demanded to know "By what law ? " this had been ordered, Hugh Peters—the fanatical chaplain—informed them, " It is by the law of Necessity truly, by the power of the Sword." What he meant was that there was no other way of getting Charles's head cut off. Then came the brute force of 1652 ; when Cromwell, sitting among them, told the members that remained : " I say you are no Parliament. Come, come, we have had enough of this. . . . It is not fit that you should sit here any longer " ; and calling in his troopers, he ordered them to clear the House. He hurled one epithet after another in their faces. " Some of you are drunkards . . . lewd-livers . . . corrupt, unjust persons." It was all probably true—but Cromwell was governing England by soldiers, which Charles Stuart had never dared to do so thoroughly. Remember, this is already the third time that Cromwell's troopers had cleared the House of Commons. Cromwell was right when he declared : " Not a dog barked at their going " ; for they were as rotten an assembly as England has seen ; and their military ejector need not have wasted on them the pious words of half-apology with which he pursued them as they went through the door : " I have sought the Lord night and day, that He would rather slay me than put me upon the doing this work."

There was nothing left of the Parliament by this last Purge ; and Cromwell, after locking the door and placing the key in his pocket, immediately marched round to the Council of State and showed them the door also. Let no one imagine that the people of England had any objection to losing their Parliament and Council. On the contrary, Professor Firth tells us : " For a few weeks Cromwell was the most popular man in the nation." The army, being now the only ruling Estate that was left in practice, had to consider itself rather seriously from the theoretical point of view. It announced that " God by their victories had so called them to look after the government of the land, and so entrusted them with the welfare of all this people here, that they were responsible for it, and might not in conscience stand still while anything was done which they thought was against the interest of the people of God."

It was a simple creed, and was probably sincerely believed by its expounders. But it had its weak places as a constitution for a democracy. However, it was still more startling when Cromwell, the "Lord General and Commander-in-Chief of all the Armies and forces raised and to be raised" (it is almost oriental in the flavour of its style), called the next Parliament himself. It was a strange outcome of this democratic revolution that it should have reduced the franchise of English freemen to exactly one!

Cromwell told his Parliament—for it was his, not England's—that it was to rule the land (so far as the "Instrument of Government" drafted by the army officers allowed) until the people were fit to elect representatives of their own. At what particular moment in the future that was likely to happen, Cromwell did not mention in his opening speech. For the moment he seemed satisfied; and this speech is full of most enthusiastic hopes. "Jesus Christ is owned this day by the Call of You. . . . God manifests this to be the day of the power of Christ; having through so much blood and so much trial as hath been upon these nations, made this to be one of the great issues thereof: To have His people called to the Supreme Authority. . . . We have not allowed ourselves the choice of one person in whom we had not this good hope, that there was in him faith in Jesus Christ, and love to all His people and Saints." This was Cromwell's avowed policy and practice on the first occasion when he had anything like a free choice. He chose a House of Saints. What followed was a tragic comedy. In a few weeks Cromwell was writing to his friends: "I am, in my temptation, ready to say, Oh would I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest. . . . I would hasten my escape from the unruly storms and tempest." Before six months had passed all the members who would not sign a resignation were turned out of the House by Cromwell's soldiers. They pleaded that they were fitly engaged in seeking the Lord—to which the colonel in charge of the eviction party replied with the curt information: "Then you may go elsewhere, for to my certain knowledge He has not been here these many years." If Charles Stuart's ghost heard those words, he must have rejoiced exceedingly.

It is on facts such as these that we have to found our knowledge of Cromwell's political policy. It is obvious that the ordinary laws of sociology will not take us very far. Half the time they would justify us in deciding that Cromwell was a fool in a dream; the rest of the time one is tempted to label him a knave—which would be altogether unjust. What, in the name of sanity, are we to make of a man who was trying to save England by electing Barebones' Parliament? Nevertheless, nothing could have been more natural: Cromwell was a religious maniac and the general of an armed force. So he turned out his opponents with his swords, and put the best saints he could procure in their place. He did exactly what one would expect of a man who was acting up to his convictions.

A general opinion by this time had arisen that if Cromwell did whatever he liked (by armed force) then he might as well be called by some appropriate title. So he was declared Lord Protector by a written constitution which obliged him to call a Parliament and consult a Council of State. The Parliament was to be elected by men possessing property worth two hundred pounds; which, of course, rigidly kept it to the Middle Class, that alone held such sums at that period—for it meant a far higher value than the same sum would mean now. And, *mirabile dictu,* these men who had risked their lives because Charles Stuart raised taxes without the approval of the nation, allowed the Protector and his Council to collect a revenue for ordinary expenditure without the consent of Parliament! As a matter of fact, the new Council was very efficient; and before the Parliament arrived the Protector got through a lot of sensible business; just as Strafford had done good work during the eleven years when Charles ruled without a Parliament. Of course, Strafford was a statesman and not a fanatic; so his efforts were better than Cromwell's, who wasted a deal of time over matters which only worried the troubled minds of Puritans. Cromwell and his Council were scheming to put an end to swearing and cock-fighting, gaming and adultery; for the last of which they enacted capital punishment—with the result that sane jurymen flatly refused to declare anyone guilty even with the clearest evidence; whereas Strafford's Council had spent its time in administering the Poor Laws for the advantage of the unemployed and the sick. But, although he had no great grasp of the problems of State, on the whole Cromwell showed common sense during his brief interval of absolute rule. It is fairly clear that he would even have tolerated the Catholic religion had it been within his power to convert a more bigoted nation; he was much attracted by George Fox, the Quaker, and his creed, and many prisoners of that sect were released. But for a man who professed Toleration, Cromwell was hopelessly illogical. It was Vane and Milton, and such as they, who really believed in liberty of conscience, and declared that the Government had no right to interfere in any way with questions of religion. Cromwell was broader in his practice than his theory; but he was no philosopher to lead his country towards higher thinking. It is perhaps necessary that someone should restrain the public conscience within limits. In that case, if a ruler had to draw the line of liberty, it is probable that Charles and Strafford would have proved more generous controllers than Cromwell. Certainly, whatever we may think to-day, at the time in question the nation soon decided that it would bring back the Stuart tyranny at all costs.

The first Parliament of the formal Protectorate met in September 1654; and its first movement toward democratic liberty was to prevent one hundred of the elected members taking their seats. Not unnaturally the Levellers joined the Cavaliers in pulling down a Government which was making the democrats look ridiculous and was filling the Royalists with hope. Cromwell met the situation in the way one would expect from his character. He divided England into twelve districts, and placed a Major-General over each. And when from all sides arose angry protests, Cromwell had the want of humour (shall we say?) to ask one of the protestors: "Why will you not own this Government to be a legal Government ?" To which question came the obvious reply: "Because it seems to me to be in substance a re-establishment of that which we all engaged against, and had with a great expense of blood and treasure abolished." When the democratic-autocrat asked with innocent ignorance what it was they wanted, again came a reply which would have crushed a more sensitive man: "That which we fought for, that the nation might be governed by its own consent." Cromwell's final question was truly pathetic: "But where shall we find that consent ?" It was almost a sob of appeal from one who had honestly tried to find national safety and good government—and, instead, had plunged from one morass into the next. He was like a lost traveller trying to cross a bog in the dark.

Cromwell dissolved this first Parliament of the Protectorate the moment the time specified in the Constitution allowed—it was almost his first regard for the Constitution! The second Parliament was called in 1656 for the same reason that compelled Charles to summon his Parliaments—he wanted money to carry on a war, with Spain in this case. But, exactly as in Charles's days, the electors were wild with indignation against arbitrary government (in this case major-generals, who were infinitely worse that shipmoney collectors); and, against a national cry of "No courtiers nor swordsmen!" the intriguing major-generals were helpless when they tried to control the choice of representatives. So many enemies of the Government were returned that again a hundred of them were kept from entering the House. There is not a single instance of Cromwell daring to face the members as they had been chosen by the electors. He either kept them out at the beginning or he had to drive them out at the end. Never once did Cromwell rule England by the free consent of a majority of the legal electorate—not to mention the will of the whole people, though perhaps not many Governments could claim that virtue.

During the rest of his Protectorate Cromwell was engaged in a subtle contest of wits, acting as the central buffer between the moderate Parliamentarians and the extreme revolutionaries; a struggle which took the form of the question whether the Protector should call himself King. Seeing that the Protectorate was being supported and controlled by the swords and guns of the army, it would have been almost a sign of weakness to revert to a monarchy; even William the Conqueror paid more attention to democratic forms than Cromwell was doing. It was, indeed, the moderate party of lawyers and merchants (and not Cromwell) who first suggested that the Protector should be offered a fully jewelled crown; for by this time they had discovered that it was better to be governed by one king than by five hundred army officers and political adventurers. Besides, Cromwell's system was turning into something strangely near a colossal farce. When even his own supporters began to resent his taxation, and he was told that "'Tis against the will of the nation; there will be nine in ten against you"; Cromwell replied: "But what if I should disarm the nine and put a sword in the tenth man's hand? Would not that do the business?" It was the most haughtily despotic answer in history. It was magnificent—and in this case it was war. But, whatever it was, it was not popular government; and it was clear that the Great Rebellion must soon dissolve in laughter—if Englishmen had any sense of humour left after ten years of Puritan rule. They had started by cutting off Strafford's head because they said he was plotting to rule England by an Irish army. They were now offering to make Cromwell a king—because he had done what Strafford had failed in doing.

Since, therefore, there was little difference between the methods by which Strafford and Cromwell (as representing the two great rival parties of the Civil War) tried to accomplish their ends, we are thrown back in our judgment on the question whether Cromwell made any better use of his power, when he won it, than Strafford had done. Compared with the bulk of his fellow-politicians, Cromwell was a broad-minded man, both in his social and his religious policy. Nevertheless his early training had been narrow, and he never fully conceived of the nation as a whole;

but, in the main, thought in terms of his own social set. Essentially he remained the statesman of the Middle Classes. He was not a man of theory. When asked by the soldiers to say what he thought of universal suffrage, he practically refused to discuss it in the abstract. He said it "did tend very much to anarchy"; and therefore he objected to Colonel Rainborow's proposal to give a vote to "the poor man, the meanest man in the kingdom." Cromwell would go no further than to hedge, as politicians have always hedged throughout history; he said he would be glad to agree to a "reasonable extension of the franchise." Colonel Rainborow had put the case: "I do think that the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to the Government that he hath not had a voice to put himself under." For Cromwell to have admitted such a doctrine would have been political suicide. There is not much evidence that Cromwell had very clear opinions concerning these social and economic questions. He went no further than a rather vague generosity that showed itself in the defence of the commoners in his early days; but, taken as a whole, one is forced to conclude that he regarded his own Middle Class as the element in the nation that should receive the first consideration. Again and again through his career (especially in his relations with the radical agitators of the army) we find him apparently heading the discontented, but really all the while holding them back by his skilful handling of the situation. Indeed, such as Lilburn openly accused him of betraying them—and there was much justice in Lilburn's charge, as anyone who takes the trouble to read the evidence can see. Nevertheless, there is this to be said for Cromwell: he was a man of superb common sense. He therefore knew very well that it was impossible to plunge forward at a greater pace than the somewhat majestic stride of nature will admit. As he himself put it, it was necessary to discover "whether the spirit and temper of the people of this nation are prepared to go along with it."

Of course, Strafford would have been as contemptuous of universal suffrage and complete religious freedom as was Cromwell. Yet there was a very different basis of thought in the two men, spite of all their similarities in practical methods. Cromwell was essentially a statesman who would protect the interests of the Middle Class and the plutocrats. Strafford had a far wider conception of his business as First Minister of the nation. He regarded the people as a whole; and gave more attention to the welfare of the poor than to the interests of the rich. The great historian of the period, Professor Gardiner, has summed up Strafford's character thus: "'Justice without respect of persons' might have been the motto of his life. Nothing called forth his bitter indignation like the claims of the rich to special consideration or favour. The rule of the House of Commons meant for him—not altogether without truth—the rule of the landowner and the lawyer at the expense of the poor. His entry into the Council was marked by a series of efforts to make life more tolerable for those who were in distress." Now if that is an accurate statement of the position—and it is made by one of the greatest authorities on the period—then it should have the fullest influence in a judgment on Cromwell. Can his democratic admirers point to any series of measures for the direct advantage of the poor, such as Strafford forced through the Privy Council?

The author, E. M. Leonard, of the standard monograph on the early Poor Law in England, thus describes the position: "The years between 1597 and 1644 are in many respects a unique period in the history of English poor relief. A great deal of evidence exists, which seems to indicate that in many places, during some of these years, the whole of the Elizabethan poor law was put in execution, that is, work was provided for the unemployed as well as relief for the impotent. After the Civil War a part only of the system survived. There are thus grounds for believing that never since the days of Charles I have we had either so much provision of work for the able-bodied or so complete a system of looking after the more needy classes." This administration was pressed on the local authorities by the action of the Privy Council; and Gardiner thinks that it was mainly due to the pressure of Strafford: "It can hardly be by accident that his accession to the Privy Council was followed by a series of measures aiming at the benefit of the people in general, and at the protection of the helpless against the pressure caused by self-interest of particular classes." The period when this policy was most actively pressed was between 1629 and 1640, precisely the years when Charles governed without a Parliament and was guided by the Earl of Strafford.

It is altogether pertinent to ask whether there is any indication in the career of Cromwell of such a deliberate attempt to benefit the poor. The answer is that there is no such evidence. Did any of the Puritans take that keen interest in the all-important matter of apprenticeship that was shown by the bigoted Churchman, Laud, who founded so many charities in support of this principle? Is there any exaggeration in saying that the Royalist administrators were far more considerate for the common people of England than the Middle Class Puritans ever were? If we must condemn both Strafford and Cromwell for governing by methods of pure despotism; if they must be criticized for shirking the first duty of a statesman—namely, to teach the people to take their share in the work of the nation—then, after condemning them both for their method, we are thrown back on their practical results. And, on that basis, the Royalists might well be held as the champions of the poor as against their Puritan masters. Cromwell was no narrow example of their creed, whether religious or economic; but, take him all in all, one can only repeat that he was the main prop of the Middle Class plutocratic party; and, on the whole, put its theories into practice—so far as he had time for any policy except saving himself and his friends from being turned out of office by the angry opposition of the majority of the English people. Whatever the rule of Cromwell was, whether it was good or bad, it was hated as never the people hated the Stuarts' rule.

In the matter of foreign policy also, Cromwell was still the faithful servant of the wealthy class on whose behalf he had (somewhat unconsciously) beaten Charles Stuart.

In Ireland—for Ireland was still a foreign land—he was particularly the tool of the rich. Professor Firth sums up: "The basis of the settlement was therefore a great confiscation of Irish land." It was not a new policy; for it was merely the continuance of the brutal methods pursued by Elizabeth's and James I's government to please the wealthy merchants of London and others who desired to get possession of Irish estates. It was only a European version of the methods of shooting blacks in Australia and redmen in America. Englishmen spare their feelings of humiliation for the ill-treatment of Ireland by refusing to read its history. Strafford had carried on this policy; though, being a man of genius and a gentleman at heart, he had made the country more prosperous than it had been since the English landed. Of course he repressed the Catholics, as far as he could, but then he repressed most people who did not spend their whole time working for the good of the State. But, being evenhanded in his justice, he refused to allow the Catholics to be ruined by excessive taxation under the excuse of penal laws against their religion. After all, he believed in good government—not brutality. It is impossible to deny that he was unnecessarily cruel in the settlement of Connaught; besides which, he broke the King's word of honour that the natives should not be disturbed in that province.

It is still harder to defend the rule of Cromwell from the charge of brutality. He went to Ireland with all the customary English ignorance of the history of the Irish nation. He was one of those emotional creatures who believe everything they read in the newspapers about the supposed crimes of another race. If there had been one atrocity by an Irishman, Cromwell, like all the other credulous readers, multiplied it by ten. Being obsessed by his divine mission to distribute God's justice over the earth, he came with the wild determination to punish the Celtic Irish for the late rising against the Protestant Saxons. His first great act of vengeance was at Drogheda, which he stormed: "Our men getting up to them, were ordered by me to put them all to the sword. And indeed, being in the heat of action, I forbade them to spare any that were in arms in the town: and I think that night they put to the sword about two thousand men." Is it surprising that a hundred men surrounded in a tower refused to surrender to the English?—"Whereupon I ordered the steeple of St. Peter's Church to be fired, when one of them was heard to say in the midst of the flames, 'God damn me, I burn, I burn!'" Cromwell may write about the heat of action, but he does not explain why the most callous hunt for survivors went on next day until another thousand had been murdered.

And we have to endure in our history-books further florid displays of Cromwell's firm conviction that he was serving Heaven. "I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches. . . . It is good that God alone should have all the glory." It was evidently not the same Deity that was worshipped by George Herbert. Cromwell's God was remarkably like the tribal idol worshipped by many of the Prussian professors and sergeant-majors. At Wexford there was another slaughter of two thousand soldiers and civilians; and Cromwell wrote: "God . . . in His righteous justice brought a just judgment upon them; causing them to become a prey to the soldiers. . . . This town is now so in your power, that of the former inhabitants, I believe scarce one in twenty can challenge any property in their houses. Most of them are run away, and many of them killed. . . . Thus it hath pleased God to give into your hands this other mercy." It is a very good example of Cromwell's manner of bringing civilization and the true religion to Ireland. But, after all, the temporary cruelty of the sword is almost more excusable than the persistent tyranny of the civil arm that followed it for centuries. It was Cromwell's conquest that really fastened English rule on Ireland; his is still the most hated Saxon name in that land. With the further ruling of his conquest he had not directly very much to do; and often he tried to make the rule more tolerable and more just: but, as Professor Firth remarks: "Justice combined with forfeiture and proscription, and without equal laws, was a legal fiction which had no healing virtue." Such was the policy of the Puritan Middle Class that Cromwell's strong arm had planted in Ireland. He must be held responsible in history for his act. He and his masters carried on the policy of Strafford with less skill and with increased brutality. Gardiner sums up the Cromwellian conquest thus: "When at last, in 1652, the war came to an end, three out of four provinces of Ireland were confiscated for the benefit of the conquering race."

If Cromwell had done all this to-day, he would be called an extreme member of the ultra-Tory Party. He and Sir Edward Carson would be classed together as supporters of the theory that Ireland was created by God to be ruled by the strong hand of England, and quite regardless of the wishes of the native Celts. In a similar way Cromwell's colonial and foreign policy would now rank him with the reddest-blooded Imperialists of the Carlton Club and the neighbouring saloon bars. In the politics of to-day the Puritan Protector would be the main support of the Unionist and Imperialist parties. He laid the foundations of the British Empire—a policy which is not usually ascribed by our historians to the Nonconformist or revolutionary parties. However, that is not the only misjudgment of the history-books. He was driven into an attack on the Spanish colonies for the same practical reason that has driven many new and unstable governors into foreign conquests—namely, his urgent need for money. For the first time in English history it was necessary to find pay for a standing army, which was one of the chief democratic rewards of this democratic revolution. The Spanish War was a deliberate attempt to plunder treasure-ships and rich colonies; as the Dutch wars were waged for the capture of trading supremacy. It is a weak argument to plead that it was also a war against the hated Catholics—for had not the Commonwealth started its career by crushing the Puritan Scotch and the republican Dutch? When it came to practical affairs, the Puritans' religion was always the last clause in the drafts of their treaties.

Cromwell may have wanted a republic and a Protestant faith; but the men whom he had put in power above all else wanted a flourishing trade. Hence the Navigation Act, compelling all trade with England to be carried in English ships, unless a foreign vessel was carrying the product of its own country. Now, seeing that the Dutch were the carriers of the world, and produced comparatively little of their own, a Navigation Act meant war with Holland, although it was the leading Protestant and democratic State. The merchant generally leaves his ideals and morality at home when he goes into politics; and when this merchants' statesman had to weigh religion against his masters' interests, then religion always discreetly gave way, often with many voluble excuses and explanations in the language of the chapels. In international affairs Cromwell did his best to crush the Protestant Dutch; allied himself with Catholic France; and hesitated a long time before declining an alliance with Spain, the leader of Catholicism! Every question was measured by its effect on England's worldly power and trading advantage; and it was measured so effectively that, to repeat, Cromwell became the founder of British Imperialism and British Commerce. The capture of Jamaica in 1655 might be called the first stone in the building. It is interesting to read that Cromwell urged on the admiral in command by the information that the expedition was "for the glory of God and the good of this nation. . . . I pray you set up your banners in the name of Christ; for undoubtedly it is His cause. . . . The Lord Himself hath a controversy with your Enemies; even with the Roman Babylon, of which the Spaniard is the great underpropper. In this respect we fight the Lord's battles; and in this the Scriptures are most plain." The Scriptures had evidently not been so plain when it was necessary to crush the Dutch, the underpropper of Protestantism. It was to people his conquests that Cromwell ordered his son Henry to seize one thousand Irish maids and one thousand Irish youths and transport them to Jamaica. The dutiful Henry replied promptly: "We shall have, upon the receipt of his Highness' pleasure, the number you propounded, and more if you think fit." Strafford never quite sank to degrading politics into a human stock-marketing. The scheme was too tyrannical for even the Puritan Commonwealth to carry through, and it was abandoned; but that was not because the Cromwell family objected.

Mr. Firth has pointed out that the Navigation Act of 1651 was the first assertion that the Colonies were a part of the British Empire; for it assumed that the English Parliament had power to control the foreign trade of the American settlers. Cromwell enforced the clause which forbade Dutch or other foreign ships to carry alien goods to the colonists, who had to wait until their supplies were brought by an English vessel. But it was the Act of 1650 that really first asserted the Imperial supremacy: for it forbade any trade with the colonists except under licence of the English Government. The pretence was that they had been on the side of the Crown during the Civil War. As the Royalists submitted, concessions were made; but at first very few licences were granted. Being a clever man (and not a dull fellow like those Hanoverian Whigs who lost us two-thirds of North America), Cromwell scarcely interfered at all in the internal affairs of the Colonies; and he made several substantial concessions by way of return for the home country's privileges under the Navigation Act. For instance, the colonists had preferences on their sugar and ginger; the export duties to Jamaica were lowered; and the growth of competing tobacco was prohibited in England. Concerning the Protector's action in India, Mr. Beer, in his essay on Cromwell's economic policy, sums up: "He was the first ruler of England who realized that the India trade was . . . a concern of the nation, to be maintained by national diplomacy and defended by national arms," and this writer maintains that Cromwell was one of those few administrators of this country who have tried to develop English trade by systematic State aid and diplomatic action. It is scarcely surprising, seeing that he was the chosen representative of the trading class that had seized power by the Civil War; though the tradition founded by Cromwell was not to bear its fullest fruit until the days of the Pitts, those idols of the bankers and shopkeepers of London. Cromwell's triumph decided that England should become the nation of shopkeepers that was to beat Napoleon's nation of peasant soldiers at Waterloo. He made England one of the conquering nations of the world, whereas until his day it had been mainly that small island off the coast of Europe which is reputed to be one of the jokes of American geography-books. Algernon Sidney, who saw the events in action, wrote: "In two years our fleet grew to be as famous as our land armies, and the reputation and power of our nation rose to a greater height than when we possessed the better half of France and had the Kings of France and Scotland for our prisoners."

If that be a true summary of the effect of the Puritan Commonwealth's rule (and it is surely the only logical deduction from the admitted facts), then it is sufficient explanation why Oliver Cromwell has such a brilliant place in our history-books. To all those who measure the greatness of their country by the square mileage, the size of its population, and the value of its exports and imports, Cromwell must be a magical figure. For he was the founder of our commercial and territorial Empire. To those who are attracted by famous victories on the field of battle, again this man must be very appealing; for he was a great soldier—one of the greatest soldiers of history. Those who are attracted by strength of character and picturesque psychology must also be satisfied by Cromwell, who is one of the few men in our history who owe every fragment of their fame to their personal character. What power he had, be it good or ill, was the lawful reward of his own strength of brain and power of will. Cromwell was not a great man's son, not a king's favourite. Before he was nearly seated in firm power he was already the object of jealousy of more powerful men. What, then, is his secret? He was not the favourite of a king; but he had the favour of an army. The history of the Roman Empire has taught that the latter is the more powerful patron. And Cromwell became the favourite of the army because he had the personal convictions of a chapel lay-preacher and the brain of a genius.

But these are not the usual reasons given for Cromwell's place in the history-books. We were taught at school that he was a great democrat. Then we should have been told that Charles and Strafford were great democrats also. Cromwell did more autocratic things in a month than his Royalist opponents did in a year. Cromwell as a democrat is little but a huge historical joke. He governed England by a standing army—a strange epitaph to put on the tomb of a man who is called a leader of the people. He is reputed to have saved the liberties of England from a tyrant monarch. He certainly beheaded the suspected tyrant—and could never once face a Parliament freely elected by the nation whose liberty he was supposed to have saved.

The orthodox tradition of Oliver Cromwell falls to pieces immediately it is collated with the facts. They leave us a fine soldier, an honest religious enthusiast, a man of broad common sense, withal dangerously near the borderline of the insane; and, at least, a gorgeous dramatic figure for a play. But those who demand great statesmanship in a man who posed as a statesman; those who think that a national leader must do something more than overcome the opposition of a battlefield; those who hold that the work of a great politician must be able to stand the test of centuries, and not merely survive the enemies of a decade; all these will find Cromwell of secondary importance. He did succeed in influencing the history of the succeeding centuries; but it is open to serious criticism whether all that was permanent in his statesmanship was not profoundly wrong. Those who think it was a good thing to put the plutocratic Middle Class in power, by the displacement of the Monarchy and the crushing of the labouring class, such will regard Oliver Cromwell—and rightly—as their first great leader. Those who believe that the depressing creed of Nonconformity has been a factor in the development of civilization and culture, such are entitled to Cromwell as their patron saint. There are those who think it was a great deed of statesmanship to have behaved so brutally in Ireland that Irish mothers, to this day, frighten their naughty children with the name of Cromwell; such will regard the present policy of English rule in Ireland as one of Cromwell's most enduring monuments. But those who see a thousand disadvantages in the modern England which Cromwell fathered and started on its career will be tempted to wish for a kinder fate which might have kept this meddlesome, strong-willed man out of our affairs. Cromwell was too like the bull in the china-shop of English history. There was a great breakage and clashing of plates. But it is not at all easy to see what good came of it all. It is too easy to see a great deal of harm.

THE WALPOLES

It would be quite reasonable to sum up the career of Robert Walpole as the first great modern English statesman (for Cromwell did little more than dig the ground for the foundations) ; it would be almost as accurate to add that he was the last—if we could forget the Disraeli comet. Whether the spinning Fates disliked the cloth of modern statesmanship when they had woven it ; whether they hastily decided that they could not repeat it successfully, one can but guess. Be that as it may, just as there had been no one like Walpole before, so he had few successors who can rank as his equals. That blend of superb common sense with rich fancy ; that delicate balance of rough honesty with worldly cynicism ; that capacity for hard work and trivial pleasure in the same person ; that incongruous mixture of the traditional Norfolk squire with one of the cleverest financiers Whitehall has ever seen : all these strange contradictions made up a Prime Minister who stands alone in our history. Of course Walpole was lucky. This wholesome man, scenting of English wheatfields and turnips, came in an age when the moral drains of Westminster were in bad order : still more, he was followed by a period when English politics, mainly under the influence of the two Pitts, sank to a depth that would have made a far worse man than Walpole look bright and clean. To pass from the russet-brown virtues of this Norfolk squire to the fragile conventions of the younger Pitt, is like going from the open air of a country lane to the hospital ward. He would be an indiscreet historian who claimed that Robert Walpole was a pattern of conventional morality, in public or private. But the difference between him and the politicians of the surrounding ages is the measure between health and sickness.

As in the case of the Pitts, it would be missing much of Robert Walpole's significance if he were taken alone, isolated from his family. Like all healthy organisms, he was firmly rooted in his environment. He was no freak; he was the most natural budding of the family tree. To understand Robert, it is necessary to know his ancestors and his descendants. Like the Pitts, the Walpoles are the only full explanation of each other. We can no more sample their quality individually than we can test the value of wheat by picking out a single grain from the granary. And as their first characteristic, it was no accident surely that their stock had been unbroken in direct descent since they first landed with the Conqueror from Normandy; while Robert himself was one of a family of nineteen, as his father had been one of thirteen. These Walpoles seem to have settled in Norfolk from the first; they had certainly lived there for centuries—no wandering people, but dwellers whose settled abode seems to have imparted a like stability to their natures.

The birthmark of the Walpoles was faithfulness. To their friends, of course; for they had the honesty of plain countrymen; but still more important, they were faithful to the traditions of their race. If there is one thing that distinguishes this family, it is that steady clinging to their rudimentary virtues and vices that can best be described as faithfulness to tradition, as the survival of the essence of the general stock. The Walpoles did not become famous for any sparkling qualities that would catch the pen of a modern journalist seeking copy for his columns of gossip. Their reputation was built on a solid foundation that would not have disgraced a Roman wall; and the façade that appeared above the ground was Norman in solidity, like their origin. They had played no sensational part in English history. They had been squires and knights, and one of them was ambitious enough to reach a bishop's mitre, in the time of King Edward I; but even he could not leave his natural habitat, for his see was that of Norwich and afterwards of Ely, not many miles from the family home. There was nothing of the adventurers about these

Walpoles: if anyone sought them they were usually to be found at home.

When the Walpoles wandered, it was not for gain, after the manner of adventurers in general. Two Walpoles, Henry and Edward, of Elizabeth's day, had to leave their beloved Norfolk, but it was because they willed to give up everything rather than surrender their Catholic faith. Henry dared to write a brave and delicate poem in defence of Edmund Campion, the Jesuit; and when Campion was hanged, Walpole stood by the scaffold; whereupon, inspired by this martyrdom, he preached his faith, until he too was executed, after many tortures which could not drag from his lips the names of his friends. Edward, his cousin, had been turned out of home by his parents when he refused to renounce his Roman creed; and when other estates came to him by descent, he sold them and gave the money to his Church. When again he inherited, again he refused to accept. Retiring instead to the Continent, he took orders as a Jesuit, and only returned to preach at the peril of his life. Even when James I pardoned him, Edward still refused to touch his inheritance. Of course it may be pure chance, but one does not come across these tales in the history of the Pitt family. Chatham's ancestors we shall find making fortunes in India, without much conscience, instead of surrendering them on account of its prickings.

There were two really great Walpoles who still demand attention: Robert, and his son Horace—the former one of England's greatest statesmen; the latter, so great that he could not succeed in being a politician at all. They will both be far better understood if we first remember one or two of the contemporary outlying members of their family; for there is much value in corroborative evidence from independent sources. There was Horatio Walpole, for example, Robert's younger brother; who was so close a repetition of him, that, after studying Horatio's career, we shall find it quite natural that the great Robert was honest and full of solid sense and very steadily reliable in any emergencies. For, after considering the life of

Horatio, it is obvious that these things were in the family blood; just as it will be clear that quite different sorts of corpuscles must have careered through the Pitt veins. Solid Horatio sat in Parliament for fifty-four years, and for over thirty of these he was member for Norfolk seats. His politics were steadily Whig—for a Walpole could not be changeable, it would seem. That may not be always a pure virtue, but one wants to discover the truth about these men. However, Horatio was too active in mind to be an ordinary country member. His great achievements in life were as diplomatist in many of the capitals of Europe; in Madrid, at The Hague, but above all in Paris. His chief characteristics were that he was honest and clever. That naturally gave him a certain distinction in his craft. When he was up against that slippery eel, Bolingbroke, in Paris, it was the steady Norfolk gentleman who won by sheer intellect and moral conviction, against an opponent who had little of either quality. The flashy Bolingbroke was a kaleidoscope of intrigue; whereas Horatio, when Townshend fell in 1730, declined the secretaryship of State, lest anyone should think that he had been playing his cards with that in view. He was always being honest before being considerate for himself. The King and Queen resented his frank letters, until they came to respect him, just because he stood up to them so boldly. One of his freakish fancies was a desire to avoid war. Of course, the idea does not appeal to the imaginative mind of the ordinary diplomat, for if there were no wars they would have so little opportunity for showing their peculiar skill in drafting treaties that will end them. We shall find Robert Walpole carrying this dull faddist notion of peace to such an extremity that the rest of the governing set arose in wrath and drove him from power; for the City merchants wanted plunder, and peace was ruining all the chances of the bright young men in the army and diplomatic service.

However, all the Walpoles were not pacifists, and it is interesting to glance at another of them, George, a grandson of Horatio, just to observe how they acted when they did take to arms. His chief command was when he suppressed the maroon insurrection of 1795 in Jamaica. He did not want to use force if it could be avoided—being a Walpole, he was by instinct a gentleman—so offered generous terms if the rebels would return to their allegiance. These terms he persuaded the Governor to ratify. As it happened, only a few of the rebels came in ; so Walpole was compelled to fight. Whereupon the Governor said the terms no longer held good, and began to exile those rebels who were in his power. Perhaps he could have made out a technical case in law for his action ; but Walpole maintained that the merciful terms stood until the Governor withdrew them, which he had never done. What is more, the indignant soldier, feeling that his word of honour was at stake, promptly resigned ; and when the Assembly in Jamaica voted him five hundred pounds to buy a sword of honour for his services in suppressing the insurrection, Walpole refused to touch the money and returned to England. He sat in Parliament as a follower of Fox, and was Tierney's second in the duel with Pitt in 1798. His modest biography is quite illuminating on the family psychology.

Nothing could be in more direct opposition to the family history of the Pitts—to contrast them with their great rivals. The Pitts, as we shall see in the next chapter, were most things that the Walpoles were not. The Walpoles were peculiarly robust in body and mind ; whereas the two famous Pitts were physical wrecks ; and with mental qualities which at times bordered on insanity, in the elder's case, and, in the younger's, had many traces of degeneracy—he could not even carry his liquor. There is no record that a Walpole was ever sick in the House of Commons ; and certainly they were never carried into it in bandages. There are such persistent signs of normal health in the Walpole family, there are such equally persistent signs of abnormal unhealthiness in the Pitt family, that a judicial analysis demands that the contrast should be carefully observed. Can the Walpole history supply such a case of degeneracy as Chatham's grand-nephew, the second Lord Camelford, who seems to have spent his life knocking people down or shooting at them ? He shot his superior officer, apparently without any plausible excuse whatever; but being a Pitt, he was acquitted by the court-martial on his bare assertion that he was in command, which he certainly was not—and it would scarcely have been a conclusive proof of his innocency even if he had been. He was fortunately killed in a duel; whereupon his sitting-room was discovered to be a museum of the different bludgeoning tools with which it was possible to assault one's fellow-men. It is said that he had a kind heart; which perhaps was some slight compensation for an exceedingly heavy hand.

Of course, it may be pleaded that all this has nothing to do with the Walpole family. But it is necessary to put them in due proportions against the background of their age, and it surely would be difficult to find any better standard of comparison than this other great family which was their chief rival. Besides, strictly speaking, as a subject of English history, the two family records should be made together, for they were a perpetual counterweight the one to the other. Just as we cannot understand a single member of either family apart from his relations, so it is difficult to grasp one whole family until we compare it with the other. And if crudity of distinction can help us, then rarely has there been a wider contrast in history than the mental and physical gap between the Walpoles and the Pitts. There is no possibility of mistaking the colour of a Walpole for an opposing Pitt. As to which is black and which is white, that is a question of moral taste, or the want of it.

There are all sorts of fascinating sides to Robert Walpole that may seem irrelevant when one is considering him as a statesman. There is something very attractive about this creature, who had that sense of gambolling which the healthy man shares with the lambs of spring. He never seems to have lost the conception of life as something to be enjoyed—he was great enough to keep work in its due place, as something to be dealt with thoroughly and quickly, so that the way might be cleared for the pleasure to come afterwards. No one ever worked harder than Walpole;

he seems to have shirked no drudgery. There is not a letter of his in existence that was written by a secretary; they say he even copied long letters with his own hand if they had to be sent to his colleagues. He was a wonder to his contemporaries for the ease with which he handled his vast masses of public affairs. And yet perhaps half his friends knew him best as the gayest of company and the keenest of sportsmen. The Wednesday holiday in the House of Commons was invented by Walpole in order that he might go a-hunting with the Richmond beagles. It has become a hoary tradition in English political circles that all great British Prime Ministers should open their head-gamekeepers' letters before their official correspondence. If Walpole did so, he was probably the only one of the lot who did it without a murmur of conscience. One cannot imagine him ever posing—even to his breakfast table and letter-bag. He was irrepressibly gay, and the boisterous shout of his laughter was a thing of which people wrote to each other. There is one of his own sentences that might almost have been the epitaph on his tombstone: "I have never heard that it is a crime to hope for the best"; and again he said: "I put off my cares when I put off my clothes."

George II started with the clear intention to snub him out of Court; and when Walpole killed two horses riding to be the first to tell him that the old King was dead, the new King coldly told him to await his orders from the Treasurer of the Household; there was almost the suggestion that he might not want another footman. Yet before long George, politically speaking, was clinging to Walpole as one honest man clings to another in a thieves' kitchen. It may have been the sense of self-preservation that made Walpole so attractive to his master; but the story of the Prime Minister's friendship with Queen Caroline needs less selfish explanation. The two had so much in common; above all, that most useful sense of reality—that calm facing of the facts—that is the distinguishing mark of genius. It is, quite against the popular opinion, also the most usual accompaniment of the higher imagination.

Queen Caroline and Robert Walpole have gone down in most of the history-books as somewhat harsh materialists. They do say that the statesman's conversation with the Queen was not in keeping with the habits of orthodox society—but then the nice people have so often been dull, and the two people in question at the moment never tolerated dullness if they could escape it—the poor Queen had to suffer enough of that in the company of her honest husband. She probably took Walpole as if he were a little secret drinking.

There was a delicacy of balance about their relations; so far at least as the public eye could see. Indeed, there was amply sufficient reason for their friendship, because they so frankly admired each other's brains. It began at least as early as 1720, when Caroline took to gambling in South Sea Bubbles and Walpole gave her his invaluable advice, for he was most successfully playing the same game. During that year Lady Cowper was writing: "Mr. Walpole so possessed the Princess's mind"; and, "The Prince is guided by the Princess as she is by Walpole." Her ladyship tells us that it was common knowledge that the Prince was in love with Mrs. Walpole, and that this was known to both the Princess and Walpole. It was an unconventional beginning to an unconventional friendship; which was to last until that closing great scene in their comradeship when Caroline, dying, committed her husband and his country to the care of her old friend. There is matter here for a modern problem play rather than a cold page of history, and the two chief characters of the plot would not be so lacking in the emotions as the history-books have written of Caroline and Walpole. It must have been a wonderful display of tact, this subtle relationship. Few people could have known each other more intimately; yet the Prime Minister kept the letter of the Court etiquette very rigidly; when the Queen dined with him at Chelsea, he only entered the room to serve the first dish—then dined himself with her household in another apartment. When he turned from Caroline's deathbed to seek the goodwill of the new favourite—"I'll bring Madame Walmoden over;

I was for the wife against the mistress, but I will be for the mistress against the daughters"—then, of course, it sounds very shockingly callous. But it was exactly what his dead royal friend would have done; for she too played with her husband's mistresses as a chess player sacrifices pawns to win the game. There was more than cynical self-seeking in Walpole's regard for Queen Caroline. His flattery rings true: "If I have had the merit of giving any good advice to the King, all the merit of making him take it, madam, is entirely your own, and so much so, that I not only never did anything without you, but I know I never could." When she lay dying, Robert wrote to his brother, to whom even a Cabinet Minister does not usually pose, "I am oppressed with sorrow and dread"; and when a Walpole put sorrow first he meant it. When it was near the end, the Queen insisted on seeing Sir Robert alone. It is clear from Hervey's record that the Prime Minister, usually so glad to speak of the honours he received in the royal company, would never tell all that passed between the two friends; while the King was as clearly fretting himself with jealousy. It was a subtle ending to a subtle friendship—which often ends in silence.

There will be many who will say that these matters of private character are merely byways in historical affairs; and that they should scarcely appear in the public picture. The theory might be debated with many protests. In so far as history has been made by individual men and women—the vast bulk of it being, of course, the inevitable working out of the slow-growing thoughts and deeds of humanity—it has been the sport of the most trivial of personal characteristics. It is an awkward fact that history has sometimes turned because a man had a rich voice or a woman a pretty face. It is altogether essential to know that Pope wrote of Walpole that he could "smile without art and win without a bribe." When Bolingbroke, who seemed to hanker for Robert's head in a charger, wrote: "His greatest enemies have allowed him to my knowledge the virtue of good nature and generosity"; when Onslow said: "The best man from the goodness of his heart to live with, and to live under, of any great man I ever knew"; when poets and political adventurers and the most judicial of Speakers of the House of Commons cannot forget that smile and that generous heart, then it is necessary to value these qualities correctly in the career of their possessor. They are not merely part of biographical gossip, but have a far greater share in scientific history than the stately historians allow.

For what, in the name of all the laws of ethics and moral philosophy, is more fundamental in a man's character than these qualities of bright charm and frank generosity? Will anyone seriously maintain that it is less important for us to know that a Prime Minister is generous to his enemies and loyal to his friends, than to discover whether he follows Locke or Hobbes or Gregory the Great in his political practice? The essential facts about Robert Walpole are so often matters very closely connected with his private character. He was probably the most honest Chief Minister England had possessed since, shall we say, Anselm. It is one of the paradoxes of history that the chief battle over Walpole has raged around the charge that he introduced systematic corruption into political life. It would be nearer the truth to say that not one Government has been so pure from intrigue and corruption since he died. They drove him from office at last, Pitt and the rest of the yelping hounds who were seeking to get his place (and not to change his policy); but when they were strong enough to appoint a committee of inquiry that was made up of nineteen of his worst enemies out of a total twenty-one, they could find so little proof of Walpole's corruption that the attack collapsed like a burst balloon. Within five years Pitt, the loudest of the pack, had publicly confessed that there never had been a good case against Walpole; a confession which drew from a proud son, Horace, this contemptuous remark in a letter to Mann: "My uncle Horace thanked him in a speech, and my brother Ned has been to visit him—*Tant d'empressement*, I think, rather shows an eagerness to catch at any opportunity of paying court to him; for I do not see the so vast merit in owning now for his interest what for his honour he should have owned five years ago." Walpole was an honest man in an age when most politicians were more than half rogues. It is not surprising that the few honest men got the reputation of confirmed cynicism, and there is every reason to think that such as Carteret and Walpole were cynics because they knew the facts; and being honest themselves by nature, their milk of human kindness curdled and became a little sour.

Walpole was chiefly original as a politician in that he was neither really original nor really a politician. It has been the habit of statesmen to claim for themselves, or to have claimed for them by their friends, that they have devised some new policy by which their country—or, more generally, themselves—could be advanced in power. Statesmen think that it is their function to discover new laws and new social ideas. It is an entire misconception of their office, and has led to many disastrous results in the history of the world. The Walpoles were true to their family traditions of simple Norfolk squiredom. They knew more about the serious facts of life, the growing of corn and the rearing of cattle, than any new-fangled theories of politics. As he was a younger son, Robert was sent to college to pick up enough book-learning to pass inspection as a parson. But even Eton and King's College, Cambridge, could not spoil his fresh intellect; though they gave him just enough impulse away from the Norfolk groove to make him take readily to political life when unexpectedly (by the death of his elder brother) he came into the family estates and the family parliamentary seat at King's Lynn. He sat for this borough to the end of his career (until he went to the House of Lords); and the persistence with which he held it is equalled by the steadiness with which he also clung, in the main, to the methods and opinions of that country town.

The normal statesman, when he arrives at Westminster and Whitehall, rapidly fits himself into all the queer intellectual and moral nooks and crannies of those two seats of politics and bureaucracy. The small man is soon swamped by the strange ideas which pass for intellectual effort in this centre of the governing class. Even bright minds become quickly tarnished when subjected to the customary damp of the low-lying moral lands of Westminster; it is not without significance that the district is built on a physical marsh. These dwellers have a very good case for themselves: they can prove, after a manner, that they are working out all sorts of new social ideas: they may honestly think that they have good intentions. But Walpole was big enough to be able to resist most of the new ideas; he hardly imagined one entirely new thought in English political life; he remained a very solid and very slow developer of national traditions that had been developing with equal slowness for centuries. As for his good or bad intentions, Walpole was not the sort of man to nurse his moral convictions: he was far from being an ethical valetudinarian. As a healthy man is unconscious of his body, so was Walpole happily unconscious of his soul. It would never have occurred to him to defend his political actions except on the grounds that they were plain reason, based on the facts.

Walpole's uniqueness in English statesmanship is that he was a man of robust common sense, with few of the disabilities of advanced thinking. Like most people of this kind, he had a lively imagination and a delicate sympathy for the views of others—it is generally the sentimental people who are selfishly unable to see any side but their own. They are too full of their own fancies to have room for other people's facts. Generosity to others is the very pith of sympathy; and that is why Walpole was merely amusingly cynical of the men who were yelping around him every day of his political life—when he might have crushed them with perfect justice. He knew there was little behind their cries but the desire for office; he knew their ideas were of very slight importance for England. So he calmly went on his way, expressing as best he could the simple theories of life he had been taught in his Norfolk manor-house. They were as superior to the claptrap of Westminster, as Pitt and his friends pumped it up, as homespun linen wears better than the muslin of a ballet-dancer at the pantomime.

Robert Walpole never got beyond the simpler traditions; and it is interesting to see how he expressed so characteristically the virtues and vices of his age. He was only prepared to make the next step that naturally followed in the national career. He had little of what the sentimentalists call the "larger vision"—usually because their mental eyesight is too bad to see anything more than an indistinct blur, which they mistake for a misty distance. Walpole could only see the facts within reach. And the most substantial fact to which England had come was that, by an increasing velocity, it was being made a great international commercial nation, instead of an agricultural local community. It was a Norfolk squire, who had every reason to disregard that great truth, who was the political idol of the City of London merchants. He certainly had married the granddaughter of a Lord Mayor who brought him a good dowry; so he must have come into close touch with the City. Still, it shows breadth of power that this squire should have been one of the first statesmen who grasped the situation. As a matter of fact, the merchants as a class were not yet admissible in high politics, and the game went to the first landed gentleman who had wit enough to understand. Walpole was one of the first men with brains to enter modern political life. He made his entry into high fame by the skill with which he handled the South Sea Bubble. Most of England that had any money to lose lost its head as well as its money. Walpole himself had made a large fortune in the gamble; and he kept his head as well as his gains. The people shouted for vengeance on the Company; but Walpole gave them what was better than revenge: he restored the public nerve. Which was about all he could do—for even the best practical sense in the world could not restore a burst bubble—not all the king's horses or all the king's men. Walpole had from the beginning prophesied disaster for this South Sea adventure; and it must have been a grim satisfaction that they should rush to him for salvation.

The other man who shares with Walpole the credit—if credit it be—of making England's commerce one of the first considerations in political affairs was the elder Pitt. The vital distinction between their two different ways of treating the same subject will show each in his clearest light. Walpole realized that the merchant had become one of the main factors of the English State; and the care which he gave to the treatment of international trade was his best acknowledgment of this fact. It is a sound opinion that it was Walpole's clever finance that laid the foundation of London as the chief commercial centre of the world. One of the few original things he did was to open up the question of free trade, by taking off export duties on one hundred and six British manufactures and by removing import duties on thirty-eight raw materials. He foresaw a great Empire supporting itself, and devised a scientific bounty system to encourage colonial exports to England; and he added an extensive bounty system to encourage the home manufacturer. That was as near as a Hanoverian politician got to economic revolution. All this, of course, clashes with modern free-trade theory; but even the free-trader generally admits that protection and bounties are often useful in early stages of development: and in Walpole's day the problem was to set English trade on its feet. This Walpole tried to do—and largely did—in a way that the thoughtless Chatham never attempted. The world was opening up every day with each new improvement of transport and with each voyage of discovery. Wealth in those days meant something very different from what it meant a hundred years later. After the Industrial Revolution, with its inventions of machinery, wealth was more easily won by building factories and producing goods. But in the days of Walpole machinery had not yet been discovered as the quickest way to a fortune. The merchant was more important than the manufacturer. If a man desired to be rich he had to send ships across the sea to the East or the West. Wealth was something that was more or less mysteriously produced in the Indies or America; when we possessed raw materials the time would come to turn them into manufactures.

It is not surprising that trade was then conceived of as a struggle with Spain and Holland and France for the markets of the world. Cromwell, as the first great representative of the merchants, made the first feeble steps, perhaps; but in his days the fruit was scarcely ripe for the plucking. In Walpole's time the subject was urgent. The question in the City, and soon to be translated to the Parliament at Westminster, was how Britain was to insist on getting her share of the new world-markets that were every day more important. The critical decision as to whether we should go to war with Spain in 1739 was the turning-point in the history of modern England. The City, backed by all its clamouring pack in Parliament, demanded war. Walpole, almost sullenly, declared for a peaceful settlement, for a compromise at the worst, for peace at all costs. It was the beginning of the fight between Jingoes who were blatantly energetic to the point of vulgarity and, on the other side, the people who were hesitatingly compromising to the verge of courtesy. Robert Walpole was one of the few modern English statesmen who have preferred to be gentlemen rather than popular politicians.

He saw quite clearly that Great Britain was out for trade, and he did not resist that development; for being so entirely a creature of his age and an acceptor of its judgments, it was almost impossible that he should have resisted it. His almost complete lack of originality made him take that position. But there are different ways of succeeding in trade; and being a gentleman, Walpole had very clear notions of what was legitimate and what was inadmissible in the world of commerce. It is perfectly good manners to compete with one's rival traders and take every opportunity of beating them out of the open markets by the fair means admitted by the customs of the age. It is altogether different to waylay your rival in the dark or attack him by superior force in the light, and beat him, not by better brains and better organization, but by stronger muscles. One can, in short, trade like an honest merchant, or one can live like a pirate. The two methods came into competition in the matter of the Spanish War of 1739.

Walpole was too well informed, and too just, to forget that all the right was not on the side of England in this quarrel concerning the trade with the Spanish colonies in America. It was an easy thing to produce carefully prompted sea-captains who would swear (quite truly) that they had lost their ears by the slicing of Spanish knives —seamen who laid their hands on their hearts and declared that, in their moment of trial, they had commended their "soul to God and their cause to their country." Any actor-manager could have done that even better than the Parliamentary Opposition did it in 1738. But temperate men knew that the sailor Jenkins, as a matter of law, had been caught smuggling; and that no mild measures would stop him and his fellows doing the same every chance they got. Spain showed every sign of desiring to be conciliatory and to come to a rational compromise. The right of searching for suspected smuggling was quite reasonable, especially when, in 80 per cent. of the cases, the suspicions would probably be confirmed. Knowing he had only a moderate case, Walpole was ready to compromise, and began negotiations with Spain. He would probably have admitted the right of search. But the Opposition were not all gentlemen, and the City merchants did not want their smuggled goods discovered. So an outcry arose that turned the political arena into something approaching a menagerie. The Young Patriots, led by Pitt and followed by every loose thinker in Parliament, talked and orated as the customers of a pot-house would talk if they had been educated at Eton. The sense was the same; it was only a difference of accent. Carteret declared in the House of Lords: "'No search!' is a cry that runs from the sailor to the merchant, from the merchant to the Parliament, and from Parliament it ought to reach the throne." If he had not been to Christ Church, Oxford, at the end of this rhetoric he would doubtless have waved his mug over his head and led the rest of the pub customers to the Palace.

It had come to the crisis; there must be a decision concerning the method by which England was to conduct its trade: by competition of merchants or by force of arms. Walpole got Spain to promise compensation for any injury done to British merchants hitherto; but, being a fair man, he did not see his way to insisting that Spain should surrender her right of search. Pitt, and his mentally intoxicated crew, became almost hysterical: without this war he saw "nothing but a stipulation for national ignominy." Walpole's language drove the Patriots into a state of frenzy. The Prime Minister certainly did not tone his words to suit their nerves: indeed, his speech was astoundingly bold for such an age. Walpole said: "Any peace is preferable to successful war." Men went to prison for believing that during the last Great War. But Walpole was not objecting to a war of self-defence against a nation that had a philosophy of conquering the world; he was merely objecting to fighting on behalf of English smugglers. In short, he did not believe in extending British trade by force of arms. Pitt believed in building a great Empire—if he had to knock down everybody who stood in the way. That is the chief difference between Robert Walpole and William Pitt. One refused to found an Empire on brute force: the other had not enough brains or good taste to think of any other possible way of founding it. Pitt won, as any man must win when he promises his nation the plunder of the world. But it must be remembered that even his own generation soon realized that Walpole had been right in this particular case; that is, he had been right (as he almost always was) when he said it was a bad policy to go to war with Spain. It did not need many months of war before they again began toasting the pacifist Minister in the City and in political clubs, where men are always perched in the watch-tower, waiting to see how the cat will jump—for the jumping of cats is the main foundation of political ethics. When peace was declared by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, the right of search was not mentioned; and if there had been no war with Spain at all, England would have been much as she was after wasting her men and her money. Walpole was one of the few statesmen who have always been on the side of sanity.

No one will imagine that Walpole was a superman. That is exactly what he was not. He was the superbly normal man, with all the faults that appertain to humanity. He was not before his age; he was of it. But he was big enough to represent the whole of it, and not merely display a corner of it out of perspective. Take the matter of religious toleration. Being a normal man, of course Walpole had little interest in dogma. He probably could not have said the Creed forwards; and might have accepted it as placidly if said backwards. Note what Walpole did when confronted by the problem of liberty of religious conscience. He had seen what fanatics would do with the cry of "The Church in danger!" during the Sacheverell trial. He had seen that no amount of reasoning would keep that sort of thing within sane bounds. So he decided that he would not touch questions of religion in Parliament, for the same reason that he would not have lit matches in a powder magazine. He would not have tolerated intolerance; but when he was asked to repeal Acts already on the Statute Book, he preferred to avoid the problem by a shallow trick. Instead of boldly repealing the Test Act and all the disabling statutes that weighed on the Nonconformists, Walpole persuaded Parliament to pass annual Acts of Indemnity, which said that dissenters who had broken the law were free from its punishments. It was not a heroic way of dealing with the problem; but it was most typical of Walpole's way of dealing with all problems.

He once said, when the King was pressing on him an alliance with a Continental Power, "My politics are to keep free from all engagements as long as we possibly can." Walpole, not being much interested in the subtleties of thought, probably meant no more than he actually said in relation to the matter in hand. But behind his mind there was a profound distrust in all high politics and all administrative scheming. His was the position of the philosopher who has decided that the world has a way of its own that is not very much affected by the small flies that buzz around it as it whirls through space. The will of the world is so much more inevitably persistent than the will of soldiers and diplomatists and parliaments. Everything that one can learn of Walpole confirms the impression that, if seriously questioned, he would have laughed that he had ever worried himself over politics at all; and he would have given as a reason for his laughter that he did not really believe that governments and statesmen did much good in the long run, and that generally they did a deal of harm.

It was, therefore, only natural that a man who thought thus would be very reluctant to plunge into a war. For one did not have to be a Chancellor of the Exchequer to see that wars were very expensive; if he could not see any ultimate gain at the end, when they were won or lost, then naturally there could be very little reason for fighting at all. If Walpole was a pacifist—and there is scarcely any other term which will cover that side of him—it was for the very ordinary reason that he did not believe that it paid to fight. It is perfectly true to say that if this was the basis of his objection to the war with Spain, then he was no more high-minded than the self-seeking merchants who shrieked for war because they did think it paid them as merchants. They thought it was the quickest way of crushing their rivals, the Spanish merchants. While Walpole was just as sure that it was not the quickest way. Now, in these questions of political judgment, it is well to be very practical and even materialist. It is well, in short, to first decide which side is right in matters of fact, before one tries to discover which is right in point of ethics. Now, in this case, the City merchants very quickly began to see that Walpole was right and they were wrong. Not long after he had been driven out of office because he was considered to be conducting the war with insufficient energy (and for many other reasons, all bound up with the Opposition's desire for office), not long after that, the men who had shrieked for war began to agree that the man who had refused to wage it should be made a duke.

Walpole, as already suggested, would probably have put his dislike to war no higher than its expense and want of satisfactory results. But he cannot escape the charge of higher-thinking so easily as that. He thought thus in matters of practice because he had the healthy mind which thinks rightly without always knowing it. The Norfolk squire had not been contaminated by the conventional thinking of the capital city. It is said that there is only one people in the world that always speaks the truth: a very primitive tribe of India—one, indeed, of the most primitive tribes in the world. It sounds very commendable and to their praise: but wise men have discovered an explanation, in that these people are so simple-minded that they cannot think of a lie. It needs too great a stretch of imagination, and their minds will not reach so far. Cynics may say that if Walpole was honest it was because he was only a countryman, untrained in the niceties of life in London. It is doubtful whether the theory would have satisfied some of his opponents when he had finished with them during a debate in the House. The man who could make them smart with his irony and tingle with his logic scarcely fulfils all the specifications of the rustic.

If this simple country nature explains some of Walpole's virtues, it certainly helps us with his failings—he had nothing that a just critic could call a vice. Of course his sexual morals were not in harmony with the written codes of to-day; but they were not very different from the unwritten rules of his own time, or indeed any time. Certainly, what there is to know of this side of him need be no secret; for he was as frank about his love affairs as when he discussed his political policy in the Houses. He was as proud of his private conquests as he was of his victories in diplomacy; and they say he talked of them as brilliantly at the dinner table as he talked of his other successes in the Parliament Chamber. Some critics will say that William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, was a greater statesman than Walpole because he devoted his whole career to conquering the world; whereas his great predecessor spent time in gallantry and sport and good company. The time may come when a wiser generation will agree with Arthur Young's answer to the French peasant who grumbled because Louis XV had spent so much money in building a fine house for his lady of that neighbourhood. To whom Young replied that, after all, it was cheaper to support the mistresses of the French King than to pay for Frederick the Great's mistress—an army which cost too many lives and livres to count. So, likewise, a wise people might have decided that it was cheaper to pay the bill of Walpole's generous hospitalities than to find the hundred millions to pay for the Pitts' wars. Anyhow, such is the fact; for good or evil, Walpole was a man of generous living, while Chatham was a model for the strictest of the chapels. We shall find later that the example does not seem to have been altogether bad in the gay man's family. For whereas Walpole's son, Horace, was one of the most delightful men of his generation, Chatham's son and heir was as big a fool, or worse, as the period produced. Walpole was not particularly happy with his wife; but he seems to have claimed no liberty for himself which he did not consider hers also; of which she would appear to have taken full advantage, until it was even rumoured that Horace was not his own son. Immediately on her death Robert married his mistress; and it is altogether typical of his frankness that, on his elevation to the peerage, he asked the King to legitimatize their child and give her the full rank of an earl's daughter. These Walpoles were not, like the Pitts, always hunting fortunes and titles, so the girl married an illegitimate son of Anne Oldfield by one of the Churchills. As for Walpole, when his second wife died shortly after the marriage, he was overwhelmed by the loss, and declared that she was "indispensable to his happiness." Which little piece of private history is one of many indications that this cleverest of men never allowed the pomps of his high office to crush one nerve of that private individuality which only the big minds treasure; which the little men allow to be crushed by the conceits of their public lives. It is an important historical fact that Robert Walpole had one of the frankest, most open natures that ever became Chief Minister of the English people; and so it happens that for once the nation had a governor who more often thought as a man than as a politician. That fact will supply the key to much of his policy. His first impulse was to be frank and open, and to apply common sense before he fell back on subtlety. That may be the reason why he was never really a popular man in political circles: he did not play the rules they had learned so carefully. They were always afraid, probably, that he would give the game away.

However, politicians never had a more generous opponent than Walpole. He never deeply resented their tricky or their low motives and their continual posing of public ideals and cleverer ideas, when all they were thinking of was higher offices. He knew they all had their price. But being so completely a man of his age, Walpole thought that offices were legitimate pursuits in public life. Did he not quite freely distribute offices to his own family? He probably scarcely gave it a thought whether it was right or wrong. The offices were there, and as somebody would fill them, it seemed perfectly natural that they should be one of the perquisites of his position. Here again there was no originality about this man: it never entered his head that the Constitution and all its machinery should be reformed on the latest scientific and ethical principles; for much the same reason that it never entered his head to discuss the other problems of modern science. They had not arrived in his time above the threshold of the human consciousness. It was quite another matter when men spent their whole time seeking for office, playing the cards of their public policy just as it suited their own hand. There is little evidence that Walpole ever played this mean game, which most of his contemporaries were following so recklessly. In his early days Walpole once or twice may be proved guilty of supporting in office what he had attacked out of office. But compared with the record of the Young Patriots, and especially Pitt, Walpole was consistency itself. And, after all, it is more important to estimate the value of his work when he got office. When he was in power, did he do well or ill? Did he do better or worse than Pitt, for example?

Whether the Hanoverians were better kings than the Stuarts may be an open question, but there is little doubt that Walpole made the new dynasty secure. These early Georges have scarcely received their full credit in history; they had many weak points, but they were more honourable and far more intelligent in practical affairs than most of the English politicians with whom they had to work. Even George III, who began by being conceited and ignorant and ended by being a lunatic, at least was full of good intentions. Naturally these kings had little respect for the office-seekers who hung round all the doors of the Palace. It is not surprising that George II burst into tears when he was compelled to accept the resignation of Walpole: for he was the very keystone of his monarchy. But it is clear that there was more than this selfish thought in the King's mind; to himself and the late Queen Walpole had become a friend. They liked him because he was sensible: if there was one thing they could not stand it was sentiment—especially when it rang as false as a bad coin. When the great struggle was proceeding for the Excise Bill, they stood by the battered Minister until he himself desired to give way. They flatly refused to accept his offer to resign when they pleased: the Queen was astonished that he could think them capable of deserting him; and the King had tears in his eyes—poor fellow, of course he was a German, and therefore very emotional. When Lord Stair came to put the case of the Opposition to the Queen, she listened patiently to his arguments against Walpole; but when the Scotchman began to plead his conscience, the Queen could stand no more: "Oh, my Lord, don't talk to me of conscience; you will make me faint. . . . Do you, my Lord, pretend to talk of the opinion of electors having any influence on the elected? . . . To talk in the patriotic strain you have done to me on this occasion can move me, my Lord, to nothing but laughter"; and then she gave him very freely of her mind on his "patriotism" and his political friends; and classified, in particular, Bolingbroke and Carteret as "two of the greatest liars and knaves in any country," which was probably true of the former, if not of the latter. The episode explains a great deal about Walpole. He was a man who never bored anybody by false sentiments, or indeed by sentiments of any kind. He only discussed the practical affairs of worldly facts. The deeper things—of which he had many in his nature—he kept to himself, like most well-bred and artistic people. He was not a third-rate melodramatist, like the elder Pitt.

Walpole kept the Hanoverians in power because he considered them honest and good for his country; they kept him in power for twenty years because he also was honest and good for the nation. It was one of the most rational political arrangements that has occurred in our history, perhaps more founded on reason than any other. Walpole was in power because he was the best man for the work: Pitt the elder climbed into supreme office because he made such a noise that everybody was only too glad to get peace by giving the baby the cake.

Just as Walpole appeared to have no philosophical views on the matter of Constitutions in the abstract, so it would be equally vain to search in his records for any modern notions of social reform. It simply had not arrived in practical life. This was partly because the people were not yet sufficiently degraded to make reform an urgent need—as it is needed to-day after a few generations of government by Pitts and Peels and Gladstones. In Walpole's day there were still yeomen who owned their farms and cottagers who had the rights of common. There were, of course, too many evils calling for redress; and it is no use pretending that Walpole's ears were tuned to such cries. He frankly accepted the system as it was and endeavoured to make the best of it for everybody. He had got no further than a firm belief that if Englishmen were to become prosperous it must be by the exertions of the merchant class, who seemed to hold the key to the economic position. Walpole, therefore, threw his financial skill into scheming for the advancement of this class. To-day it would be fair to say that such a policy would be purely plutocratic. But we must remember that at the beginning of the seventeen-hundreds the gulf between

Capital and Labour had not been made. Walpole had still some excuse for thinking of the nation as a whole. Besides, it is by no means as certain as some ardent natures imagine that it is possible to do much more than accept the system that nature is slowly evolving for us. Anyhow, most of the great reforms which have been trumpeted so loudly turn out on trial to be very disappointing. Perhaps Walpole talked little of "reform," not because he was callous about evil, but because he was too wise and honest to hold out as hopes what he believed to be dreams. But we must construe his silence on such matters as we please. At least, it remains a silence, and Walpole added little or nothing to the legislation of social reform.

There has been much discussion concerning Walpole's place in constitutional history. He is said to have founded the Cabinet system, and to have made the House of Commons supreme in the State. He probably did both. But it is dangerously superficial to attach most importance to this aspect of the statesman. For both accomplishments were almost accidents, so far as he was concerned: it is doubtful if he had many theories on the subject; though he recognized the fact, as is proved by his refusing a peerage in 1723, and passing the offer to his eldest son. It was only when he knew his career had ended that he left the Commons for the Lords; and, as he told Pulteney, who had become Earl of Bath (and ruined his political chances), "You and I are now two as insignificant men as any in England." Now it was different in the case of Chatham, who was always declaiming in rounded periods on the voice of the nation and the liberty of man. Since the House of Commons was not particularly favourable to Pitt, of course he had to invent a new supreme authority which he called "The People"; which led to that famous snub when he was pleading a vote of the Commons in favour of Admiral Byng's pardon. "Mr. Pitt," snapped the King, "you have taught me to look for the sense of my subjects in another place than the House of Commons." But Walpole had no theories of these kinds. If under his rule the Commons and the Cabinet became the chief elements in the Constitution, it was just because he himself was by far the cleverest and most active man in the Government, and he happened to be in the Commons, instead of the Lords ; while, naturally, no one could stand against him in the Cabinet because he worked harder than any of the rest and had better brains than they had. Thus, by accident, wherever Walpole was became the important place ; and the supremacy of the Commons, and a Cabinet united more or less absolutely under a Chief Minister, were the outcome of Walpole's long years of rule.

But is the result anything to pride ourselves on to-day ? Granting the argument that Walpole gave us the Cabinet and the Commons, can we still be sure that it was a great deed in constitution-building ? The House of Commons has become the fortress of plutocracy ; and the united Cabinet is the very heart of the corrupt Party system. Do we find either of these exceedingly admirable now ? Cannot we imagine other developments that might have been very much better for this country ? Would frank, cynical, honest Robert Walpole like his creations if he could come back to lead them again to-day ? But, indeed, to repeat, he had no intention of creating them, they merely happened. Walpole's claim to fame in English history is of quite another sort. It so happens that this man, who is usually set down in the books as the most unscrupulous of men in public and a most sinful being in private, has in the main a purely moral appeal in the history of English politics. He taught Englishmen that it is possible to be a gentleman and a politician, to be an honest man and a wise ruler. He taught further that common sense in a stateman is of greater importance than philosophy, and that most of the rhetoric of politicians is empty wind.

Walpole's story does more to expose the rottenness of political life than almost any other biography of his class. He is valuable in constitutional history not because he was a great politician but just because he was a very bad one. He has been credited with founding new theories of government. It would be truer to say that he went far towards making the governing class ridiculous. He was continually making the intriguers look contemptible. He had no moral pose about him. When he did protest against the stupidity and insincerity of the system, it was with the cynical touch of the man of the world who cannot lower himself to anger or revenge; he often got no further than a curl of the lips. Note the way he expressed himself in moments of pressure. Thus, when the Excise Bill tumult had reached its climax, he said, "This dance it will no further go." Dance! He would not credit these clamouring political opponents with seriousness; it was at best a frivolous amusement to them; and, at the worst, mainly hypocrisy. For, indeed, the political clamour against the Excise Bill is now admitted to have been shamefully insincere—just one way of turning rivals out of office. The people probably had more earnest objections to it; dreading lest it was another way of imposing Government inspectors over them. Now, alas, we have no such love of freedom—we accept an inquisitorial Insurance Act as a flock of sheep accepts a sheep-dog. The politicians knew perfectly well that these fears were almost baseless in the case of the Excise Bill; and they would not have objected to that result if it had followed it. Walpole may have been hasty in his contempt at times, but when he felt contemptuous he blurted it forth—which is at least a healthy indiscretion. He used a similar word to "dance" when Queen Caroline lay dying—we must forgive him if his nerves were overstrung. Someone had suggested that the Archbishop of Canterbury should be sent for to pray by her side. Walpole probably knew more of Caroline's faith than most people, and this is how he settled the urgent question for the courtiers. He turned to the Princess Emily: "Pray, madam, let this farce be played. The Archbishop will act it very well. It will do the Queen no hurt, no more than any good; and it will satisfy all the wise and good fools, who will call us all atheists if we don't pretend to be as great fools as they are." One cannot imagine a politician who "played the game" being so indiscreet in his language as that. Walpole may have been right or wrong in this case. The pursuit of politics was largely, and still is, a game of make-believe; and

Walpole was one of the few men who had the pluck to be frank about it and not a theatrical dummy. It may seem a small thing as a matter of constitutional history; nevertheless, if it were carried into practice it would revolutionize politics as no rearrangement of the Cabinet system could ever do. For then there would be three fairly distinct parties in the Houses—the dull people, the rogues, and the wise men. It would be easier to select candidates classified in this manner. The distinction between Whigs and Tories is mainly the theatrical manager's classification.

A few generations of Walpole's frankness, and party politics would have died of shame. He has always been regarded as the greatest of the Whigs, and in so far that it meant support of the Hanoverians against the Stuarts, then such he was. But he discussed every question on its merits and as a matter of practicability. He threw over the very basis of the Whig foreign policy when he insisted on peace, and even alliance, with France. It may be argued that by his friendship with France he was overthrowing the longest tradition of English history. But this is only a superficial view. For the old mediæval hostility to France had been mainly a barons' squabbling; and in Walpole's day it was at base the outcome of the intriguing mind of an imported Dutch King. William insisted on war with France because he was a Dutchman: Walpole was quite ready to make an alliance with France because he was a wise patriotic Englishman; he saw that an alliance would be more to our advantage than a war—especially when Louis XIV had been beaten. He refused, again, to be a sound Whig when it came to religious squabbles; and told the Nonconformists that the time would never come when he would repeal the Tory High Church legislation, because, as we have seen, it would mean bitter national strife, and he did not consider the matter was worth the tumult. He threw over the Excise Bill when he found that meant strife also. Some critics say he was a coward and would have thrown overboard anything in the world so long as he could cling to office. In fact, he stayed in office because there was no one nearly so capable of doing the work. He remained Prime Minister so long as he had a majority in the House of Commons. When his rivals beat him at last with the cry "Down with corruption!" they won, not by proving the case against him, but by bribery! The Prince of Wales confessed that in the two critical divisions in the Commons on the Westminster and Chippendale election appeals, he spent "in corruption, particularly among the Tories," the sum of £12,000. Walpole was beaten because he was too honest a man to bribe. Shippen, the leader of the Jacobites, led all his friends out of the House without voting, saying contemptuously that it was all a game of party politics, and he did not care which side won—which action, of course, drove the adventurer Bolingbroke wild with passion to see his petty party intrigues made ridiculous.

But it is not fair to judge a Prime Minister by what he says or even by what he does. For the chief of a State, whether he be monarch or statesman, is usually the one man who can neither say nor do what he desires. Such men must be judged by more indirect methods. And the history of Horace Walpole, the son of the Chief Minister, will tell us more about the father than he could tell for himself. Even the outspoken Robert Walpole had his limitations, and nothing limits a man more than being a Prime Minister. It has somewhat the same effect on his character as putting a lark into a cage, or sending a healthy lion to walk up and down behind his bars at the Zoo. Even Robert probably only said and did half what he wanted. But his son was on a different footing; he could safely be a Walpole, without the general public spending its time looking through his windows or even throwing stones through them.

To build a theory of Robert Walpole on the character of Horace will at once rouse the fundamental objection that even the parentage has been doubted—and by no means on entirely negligible ground; though, on the whole, the evidence is good enough that he was his legal father's son. Certainly, he was his spiritual son. He revered the great Minister, and continued to live in his house even when he was a grown man. He was Robert's staunch defender—and to undertake such a task needed no *embusqué* in those times. Gathering all the evidence, we are justified in the conclusion that Horace was not far away from what Robert would have been if he had not been quite so robust and had not chanced to take up politics as a profession. Horace was Robert in mufti, living in retirement; merely thinking, when his father was forced to act; and thinking in private instead of speaking aloud his thoughts in public. The son supplied the theory of life which his father was so busy in carrying into practice that he never had time to meditate on the rules. They both had much the same foundations, strange though it may seem on the first glance, for Robert was the craftsman and Horace was the philosopher. If we want to know what Robert thought, it is well worth taking the trouble to discover what Horace said on the subject in the intimate privacy of his delicious letters.

We have seen that the keynote of the Prime Minister's policy was his dislike of war and his clinging to peace at such a cost that half the nation was shrieking that the price of peace was our national honour. Robert Walpole never seems to have put his policy on any higher ground than the very mundane reason that war was expensive and not the best way of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion. But a few words from Horace put a whole philosophy of life behind what Sir Robert did in every day practice. Yet withal, there is that note of sane materialist common sense that made his father adored by the City merchants, even when they only understood a fragment of what their political leader wanted. There is a letter of April 1777 which, were it written to *The Times* to-day, would probably bring down on the head of its writer enough Jingo oratory to float another "Nationalist" party in Parliament. "I look," wrote Horace Walpole to Mann, "upon a great part of America as lost to this country. It is not less deplorable that such an inveteracy has been sown between the two countries as will probably outlast even the war. . . . What a difference, in a future war with France or Spain, to have the

Colonies in the opposite scale instead of being in ours. What politicians are those who have preferred the empty name of *sovereignty* to that of *alliance*, and forced subsidies to the golden ocean of commerce?" So far the case might have been grasped and approved by the most practical of the City gentlemen. But the scope of the argument is extended when Horace continues, and turns to the position in India: "We had acquired an Empire, too, in whose plains the beggars we sent out as labourers could reap sacks of gold in three or four harvests; and who with their sickles and reaping-hooks have robbed and cut the throats of those who sowed the grain. [Could the writer have been thinking of Diamond Pitt?] These rapacious foragers have fallen together by the ears. . . . I know nothing of the merits of the case on either side: I dare to say both are very blamable. I look only to the consequences, which I do not doubt will precipitate the loss of our acquisitions there; the title to which I never admired, and the possession of which I always regarded as a transitory vision. If we could keep it we should certainly plunder it, until the expense of maintaining would overbalance the returns; and though it has rendered a little more than the holy city of Jerusalem, I look on such distant conquests as more destructive than beneficial; and whether we are martyrs or banditti, whether we fight for the Holy Sepulchre or for lacs of rupees, I detest invasion of quiet kingdoms, both for their sakes and for our own; and it is happy for the former that the latter are never permanently benefited."

The case against blatant Imperialism and vulgar Jingoism has never been more precisely stated, both in calm sense and in passionate contempt. It was a most savage attack on the Pitt ideals, which the son of the great peace Minister had lived to see overthrow the policy of his father. It would be difficult to sum up more compactly the difference between the Walpole ideals and those of the Pitts. When we find Horace with such ideas so continually behind all that he wrote, it is not an unfair suggestion that such was his heritage from the family tradition; for his philosophy fits so accurately into the fretwork of Sir Robert's practice. Horace is what his father would have been if the latter had been strong enough to keep out of politics. Horace is the Norfolk squire come to London Town as a gentleman; whereas his father had travelled thither as a member of Parliament.

But hear Horace Walpole still further on the question of militarism. On September 12, 1781, he wrote: "This is war! One sits at home coolly *hoping* that five or six vessels full of many hundreds of men are gone to the bottom of the deep! Can one look back on the last six years and not shudder at the devastation deliberate love of power has committed—to the utter loss of power! . . . We are dreaming of recovering America; we might as sensibly pursue our claim to the crown of France." It was the answer of Robert Walpole's son to the continual braying of the Pitts' trumpets of British Imperialism. One feels that the delicately minded Horace was bored to desperation by the vulgarity of the new creed, and indignant with the stupidity of it. Being a man of intellect—and not a mere sentimentalist like Chatham or an unhealthy recluse like Pitt the Younger—Horace knew who it was who won the prizes of this policy of conquest and who it was who suffered the losses. Many years before, in 1759, when he heard of the capture of Quebec, he had written: "The generals on both sides slain, and on both sides the seconds in command wounded; in short, very near what battles should be, in which only the principals ought to suffer." That was throwing down the glove to the fantastic Pitt boast that they were winning wealth for the whole British nation. Horace Walpole, who had the family distaste for inflated rhetoric, thus expressed his opinion that the people of England were dancing to suit the convenience of the men on top who called the tune; and he was delighted when the top-dogs paid the price of their own adventures.

With all their experience of political life these Walpoles never ceased wondering how their contemporaries could be so forgetful of personal honour. This is what Horace said in 1781, when one would have imagined that he was old enough to be a little cynical of lapses of consistency in public affairs; he was writing of the American War: "I do look on Lord Cornwallis as a renegade. He was one of the five who protested against the Stamp Act. He therefore had no principles then, or has none now, and neither in complaisance with the vulgar or the powerful, will I say I approve him. When a gentleman, a man of quality, sells himself for the paltry honours and profits he must quit so soon, and leave nothing but a tarnished name behind him, he has my utter contempt." Then Horace continued with one of the shortest declarations of human rights: "I prefer the liberation of mankind to any local circumstances. Were I young and of heroic texture, I would go to America; as I am decrepit and have the bones of a sparrow, I must die on my perch; and when you [he is writing to the Countess of Upper Ossory] turn courtier, I will peck my bread and water out of another hand." Which, take it all in all, is perhaps as defiant a claim for human freedom as ever was written—and daintily put, withal.

Very few people have dared to challenge Horace Walpole's historical accuracy. He wrote so many letters that those preserved and published fill seventeen volumes. Then, there are six more fat volumes of the history of the reigns of George II and George III, besides his *Reminiscences*. His work on art and his fiction and belles lettres need not concern us here, except as a reminder that this second generation of Walpoles had wearied of the trickeries of political life and retired into more dignified pursuits. They were intended for a quiet honest life; and the noise and bustle of the Pitts and their friends were for less sensitive minds and nerves than Horace Walpole's. He carried on his father's memories, so quite naturally he could not succeed in the new politics; just as an honest little shopkeeper goes down before the avalanche of the advertiser bred in the financial slums of New York. The Walpoles were the last of an older and more civilized world. The Pitts were the tub-thumpers of the new generation, where noise was to have more weight than reason and statesmanship was to give way to the politicians. The Pitt policy was bursting into full bloom by 1761, and this is how Horace Walpole describes the election of that year: it "now engrosses all conversation and all purses; for the expense is incredible. West Indians, conquerors, nabobs, and admirals, attack every borough. . . . Corruption now stands upon its own legs—no money is issued from the Treasury; there are no parties, no pretence of grievances, and yet venality is grosser than ever. The borough of Sudbury has gone as far as to advertise for a chapman! We have been as victorious as the Roman and are as corrupt. I don't know how soon the Prætorian militia will set the Empire to sale." Then follows a quaint little anecdote which will interest those who concern themselves with the manner in which our present ruling families founded their fortunes. "Sir Nathaniel Curzon has struck a very novel stroke, advertising that the King intended to make him a peer, and therefore recommending his brother to the county of Derby for the same *independent* principles with himself. He takes a peerage to prove his independence, and recommends his brother to the Opposition to prove his gratitude."

It is not possible to understand Sir Robert Walpole the Prime Minister until one has understood his son, the letter writer. They are part of the same picture, and one must see the whole of it. And charming Horace himself will be more understandable when set beside the son whom Chatham left behind. John Pitt, the second earl, was a nuisance to his friends and a danger to his country. Being a more insignificant man than his father, he carried the latter's pompous manners still further: it was said that they "forbid approach and prohibit all familiarity." In short, he was something very near being a starched fool. Even his own brother had to remove him from the Admiralty; whereupon Chatham began to imagine that he had military qualities. His conceit grew so big that he said he ought to have been sent to the Peninsular War instead of Wellington; so to comfort him they allowed him to command in the Walcheren expedition; with the result that he made it one of the laughing-stocks of English history.

> Great Chatham, with his sabre drawn,
> Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan;
> Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
> Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham.

It was the last great deed the Pitts performed for England. It is not an exaggeration—as the hastily misinformed will think—to say that it was fairly typical of their family traditions. It is impossible to imagine a Walpole in such a predicament.

THE PITT FAMILY: AND ITS MYTHS

It was hastily assumed, because Charles Darwin wrote up the subject of Evolution and somebody else invented a motor-bicycle, that the age of myths had long ago passed. It was understood that we now consider only facts—and that romantic fancies are left to the children and the poets. Whereas, on the contrary, the last hundred years have seen the birth of stranger mythical creations than ever soothed the mind of an inquisitive Greek. We have written for ourselves a history that is packed with the wildest legends, the most impossible tales of statesmen—a history that is full of freaks of fancy and not creatures of fact. And the wildest of the wild romances of modern history is the great myth of the Pitts. Never did a calculating priesthood play such tricks with its congregations as when the historians of England dressed the Pitts in the robes of patriots and decorated them with the symbols of statesmanship. The legend of the Pitts is one of those amazing superstitions that have coiled round the mind of man. There were so many advantages in the Greek myths. They were generally beautiful; and, somewhat unexpectedly perhaps, they are now being discovered to be true. The excavations in Crete have turned the Minotaur from a romance into a history; the tales of the early Greek races are being read as the latest word of ethnological science. But the English modern myths could never be claimed as beautiful, and they are turning out to be untrue. Indeed, they are superstitions rather than myths; for the myth is usually a true story which university gentlemen are too nervous to believe. But to come to the Pitts. Ninety-nine Englishmen in every hundred, if asked to describe them in a few words, would declare that they were the fullest expression of that virile energy which has made England supreme; that they were the finest type of business-like patriotism and British common sense. Such is the Pitt Myth. The Pitts in real life were as like this fancy picture as a cabbage is like an oak or a tadpole like a lion. A cabbage has roots like an oak, and the tadpole has a tail like a lion. But Nelson could never have won Trafalgar in ships built of cabbages, while a tadpole has no right to the title of king of the beasts. The two famous Pitts, far from being efficient patriots, were, in the main, only very successful sentimentalists. But it is not fair to the English people to tell them the whole truth about the Pitts in a few callous sentences. The worst must be broken more gently by a calm statement of the main events of their lives; free from the exaggeration of the somewhat emotional persons who have written so much of history. The university don, being rather old-maidish in his habits, often shares with his aunts a certain prejudiced outlook on life which leads him into false judgments. The orthodox historians have spent much of their time in misjudging the Pitts out of all human recognition. It will require a great effort of calmer judgment to restore the truth; to suggest a plan for exhuming these two buried Englishmen, and replacing the fantastic images that have been raised above their tombs. They will not necessarily be pleasant images, but they will at least in some way resemble the dead.

The two great Pitts cannot be understood alone. They must be taken with the whole Pitt family of which they were so perfect an expression. The two Williams fulfilled the destiny of the family tradition, the ideals of that very rough Diamond Pitt who founded the family fortunes in India by breaking as many of the moral and criminal laws as he found in his path. His chief aim in life would appear to have been the building of a great fortune. To that end he found it necessary to assist in the building of the British Empire. It would be hard to express more precisely the intentions of the first Lord Chatham—though to him, being less practical than his cleverer grandfather, a fortune was represented by the robes and trappings of a peerage and high offices, rather than by a big banking account. Both the Williams lost no opportunity of refusing money, with a blast of trumpets which is more generally associated with the seizure of spoils rather than their surrender; though in the long run they both somehow managed to accept quite convenient pensions and perquisites at the public expense. They knew to a nicety just how far honesty is the best policy—and the man who measures that is often something of a knave.

But the Pitts must be taken in chronological detail. It is the sad story of a family that went from bad to worse; that started by stealing diamonds in India, and finished, in the younger Pitt, by almost stealing the honour and safety of the British people by conducting the war against the French with the irresponsible thoughtlessness of a second lieutenant. Until they got into bad company in India and in London, and became financiers and politicians, the Pitts seem to have been a reasonably honest family in quiet Dorset. They emerged from a probably still more honest obscurity (for fame is so often the first-fruits of something shady) in the time of Henry VIII, when Nicholas Pitt was a modest landowner. His greatgrandson appears to have been less strict in his life, for he became Sir William of Strathfieldsaye; and it was not long before his branch of the family got so intermingled in official posts and political intrigues that George Pitt (1722–1803), a contemporary of the two great Williams, found himself (without any reasonable excuse to explain the position), as Baron Rivers, in the House of Lords. He had been abroad as ambassador, and became Lord Lieutenant of various counties at home; then rose to be a Lord of the Bedchamber; and when he died Flaxman worked a mural tablet for his tomb. He was a real Pitt, and an example of how perfectly they represented the ruling class of their century. He was very handsome; though Horace Walpole candidly described him as "brutal and half mad"; while his wife was "all loveliness within and without." His brother became a knight and a general, and married the daughter of a viscount; and did all the things then considered correct form in the governing set. He took himself seriously in a way, being a Pitt; and his "Letters to a Young Nobleman upon Various Subjects, particularly on Government and Civil Liberty . . . with Some Thoughts on the English Constitution and the Heads of a Plan of a Parliamentary Reform," in its gorgeous title simply reeks of the family sentiments.

He is so illuminating on the Pitt tradition that it is hard to tear oneself away to the other branch of Lord Rivers' kinsmen, Thomas Pitt, the grandfather of the first great William, and the real jewel of the family in more senses than one. Thomas's father was the rector of Blandford; and his uncle, William Pitt, was the mayor of Dorchester. Thomas had restless ambitions and went to sea in a merchantman. When he arrived in India he refused to return with his ship, as bound by his contract, and settled down with the persistent intention of making a fortune. The established East India Company tried to turn him out as an interloper and infringer of its charter; but as Thomas Pitt was not the kind of man who could be turned out, it eventually came to terms of a sort, and allowed him to trade on his own account, and even undertake commissions for the Company. But he was soon accused of falsifying the invoices in his own favour and was dismissed in 1681. The Company, after eight years' experience of him, could only issue the despairing appeal: "Secure his person whatever it cost the government, he being a desperate fellow and one that we fear will not stick at doing any mischief that lies in his power." Indeed, he was so unscrupulous a person that the Company a few years later thought he was just the man it wanted as Governor of Madras; but that was not until 1695, and Thomas had founded several typical Pitt traditions before then. After being turned out of India in 1681 he began intriguing with the politicians to get a charter for a new rival India Company. Since Charles II was in favour of the Old Company, backed by Sir Josiah Child, a Stuart man, Pitt therefore became a Whig man. He had no philosophical reasons, after the manner of Locke or Hobbes: he was a merchant, not a philosopher.

Politics to Thomas Pitt was merely a way of making money by manipulating trade. It was the very heart's core of the political theory of the eighteenth century. He wanted to found a New East India Company which would be his own, and so push out of the way the Old Company which belonged to his rivals. Thomas Pitt was one of the first men who made Imperialism into a practical business. He saw that the House of Commons was the place for the company promoters who were playing for big stakes. An office in the City was good enough for the smaller men; but the big minds who coveted big purses must go to Westminster. So Pitt went into Parliament and became a Whig. Most of the adventurers became Whigs, because it was essentially the creed of the new men who wanted to turn out the old—whether politicians, Government officials, or the established traders. The Stuarts had never had much consideration or liking for the merchants: for the Stuarts, to give them their due, never became modern enough to regard government as a trade by which one could make money more easily than by keeping a shop. To the politicians and the governing set of the Georgian age this was the whole essence of the game. The British Empire became a great trading company; strictly limited to the shareholders so far as the dividends went, while the national purse and the national blood paid all the losses and found the necessary capital. For the company promoter it was an ideal State, and Thomas Pitt was one of the happiest of the idealists. He put his money into one of the greatest financial adventures that the bankers and merchants have ever floated. He became an Imperialist, a politician and a Whig: he founded the Pitt family and the Pitt tradition.

In those days, in order to become really respectable it was imperative to be a landlord. So Thomas Pitt began to invest the spoils of India in English manors. An estate near Salisbury had gained the necessary influence to return him to the Convention Parliament of 1689 as the member for that cathedral town. It was symbolic of the new politics. The mediæval Church had given place to merchant adventurers. Pitt voted that the Stuarts who had opposed his New India Company should be turned out of office, and that he and his friends—and incidentally a man from Holland named William of Orange, with an English wife—should be put in the place of the old Government; and, still more important, in the place of the Old Company. Everything happened as he intended. When, in 1691, the New Company calmly started operations, no one had the power to suppress it. Of course, the old men had not entirely gone, and there was opposition; Pitt was even refused a passport for India, and summoned before the King and Council. But he merely shook himself when he came out, and it all rolled off, like water off a duck's back. When they said no passport for India, he said he was only going to Madeira—and started for India at once. Before he left, he had made his position at Westminster quite secure by buying the parliamentary seat of Old Sarum, which was ready for his use when he returned to England in 1695.

The career of this great founder of patriotism and British Imperialism went gaily on. Already, in 1678, he had linked himself to the royal family of the land which he and his descendants were so soon to rule by marrying the granddaughter of James V. But inasmuch as his rule of the Empire was to be of an unconstitutional kind, and not recognized by public statutes, so perhaps it is significant that the granddaughter should be merely of the illegitimate royal line. Nevertheless, the marriage was altogether typical of the Pitt adventurers in their less pompous days: had William Pitt the Younger possessed a son he might have asked the hand of an authorized and hall-marked princess. Thomas got to know his wife through his ardent friendship with a man whom he met in India—Vincent, "a notorious swindler who was afterwards convicted of serious crime and fled to England with Thomas." Mrs. Pitt was the niece of this attractive creature.

The Company after many years of struggle could stand out no longer against the daring deeds of this magnificent penny-dreadful hero; though there must have seemed a lingering hope of escaping from his intrigues when Pitt started in 1692 the new game of fitting out a privateer ship to raid the French. But it was not to be, however much the schoolboys of England will regret this lost chapter when the lives of the Pitts are issued (as surely they will one day be) in penny form with the usual attractive cover. So, as already said, the Company in despair made Thomas President of Fort St. George, or Governor of Madras. And a splendid servant he made: "he always saw what to do, and did it." If he had possessed any sense of what was honest and honourable he would have been quite a splendid fellow—but then he would not have founded the British Empire; neither would he have made himself a fortune which enabled his grandchildren to become the rulers of England; for, without that fortunate backing, in a world where position went by merits and only rarely by favour, it is quite probable that the two great Pitts would never have been recorded in history. However, that is anticipating. Thomas Pitt, in all practical senses of the term, was a far better man than either of them. He was efficient; he could do his job—which was to make the Company pay and prosper. Of course, being a Pitt, he put on rather pompous airs and lived in great style in India; but then the Oriental imagination, being more cultured than the imagination of the drab West, likes style and pomp. But Thomas Pitt never forgot that he was a merchant; whereas his grandson, Chatham, could scarcely ever remember that he was a statesman, so continually did he appear to think that he was something much nearer the actor-manager.

Perhaps it would be more precise to say that Thomas never forgot that his chief business was to make money; and if it could be for himself instead of for the Company, that was by no means a serious fault in his eyes. In 1701 he began his greatest adventure. One day an English skipper stole a diamond from a slave and sold it to a native merchant, who in turn carried it to Pitt, who often bought such gems when Governor, for they were a convenient way of remitting official moneys when banks were not so common as they are now. But this diamond was good enough to keep for himself; indeed, he paid the merchant a sum of over £20,000 for it. It was not until 1717 (after an alluring series of adventures, more suitable for the truth of romance than the solemn unrealities of the history-books) that at last Thomas sold his treasure to the Regent of France. They say he got £135,000 for it. With the proceeds of this stolen gem the Pitts established themselves in English public life as our rulers: they were henceforth in a position to dictate their terms to the less fortunate people who had no luck. Of course Thomas proved before the Council of Madras that he had not stolen it; and in the eyes of the police constable he was perhaps innocent; but in that world where they composed "Moral Essays," as Pope did, they wrote somewhat biting lines on the event. Not only the moralists who write verse had their moments of cynical hesitation; for it appears that when in 1709 the Company had another quarrel with its masterful servant, a charge of illicit diamond-buying was one of the accusations under which he was packed off to Europe; and it is just a little suspicious that Pitt landed in Sweden instead of England, and stayed there almost a year—as though he thought he might be safer for a time to be beyond reach of the law. It is one of the chief difficulties of the governing class to dodge those embarrassing laws which they are compelled to make for the restraint of the common people who live in the world beneath.

Back in England in 1710, Thomas Pitt began to count the spoils he had reaped in India. Then he translated them, as occasion permitted, into those English manors which were to make the Pitts one of the ruling families of their race. When they were all bought they made a picturesque list, and one feels that they should go into the lilt of verse rather than cold prose. There were the estates of Bosconnoe, Bradock, Brannell and Treskillard in Cornwall; Woodyates and Stratford-under-the-Castle in Wiltshire; Abbots Ann in Hampshire; Swallowfield in Berkshire; with Blandford St. Mary and Kynaston in Dorset.

They should be set together, after the manner of "Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all"; and, when the memory of the British Empire is not so sweet in the nostrils of patriotic Englishmen as it may be to-day, perhaps, who knows, the names of the Pitt manors may be passed down in tradition as an awful warning of how an Empire was built on blood and labour, in order that some few men might make themselves lords by the spoils.

For that is the sober truth: and these Pitt manors are the root of half the folly of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Of course there would have come other men to take their place if the two Pitts had not arrived on the stage. But surely nobody else could have been quite such effective actor-managers of the alluring melodrama which caught the fancy of the English crowd. They were indeed born for the part they played. They received from old Thomas those priceless heirlooms for such players in such a play; he left them outward pomp and style, personal ambition, an unscrupulousness which had made Thomas's fortune in trade and was to make his grandchildren's fortune in political intrigue; a most useful knack of writing and speaking piously, which gave so many more opportunities of acting impiously; a host of family connections which had dug their roots deep into English social life. All these things descended to the two great Pitts as their heritage from Thomas.

Consider for a moment the social factors of this inheritance. Robert, his eldest son, married Harriet Villiers, the sister of the Earl of Grandison, and their son was William, first Earl of Chatham. Thomas, the second son, married the daughter of the last Earl of Londonderry, and came in for the surviving scraps of that house as the first earl of a new line. His history shows all the symptoms of his having been a thorough scoundrel. John, the third son, seems to have been duller or honester than his brothers, for he escaped a title himself, but married the daughter of Viscount Fauconberg; but Lucy, his sister, married General Stanhope, who naturally showed the respect due to her family by becoming an Earl. Her sister, Essex, married a Cholmondeley, and her grandson became Lord Delamere. Of Robert Pitt's children, besides William of Chatham, Thomas married a daughter of the house of Lyttleton, and played his cards so well that his son (that is, Chatham's nephew) became Baron Camelford of Bosconnoe. This first Camelford was a true son of the Pitts, seeing that he was a flowery orator and "the prince of all the male beauties." As the member for Old Sarum he had the delicate task of making, in 1782, a speech against parliamentary reform, which he is said to have accomplished "without a false step"! But to his credit be it recorded that next year he was on the other side, and even offered to sacrifice his family borough for the national cause. Which shows that he was either reverting from the Pitt type or perhaps merely posing—which was also entirely after their manner. When we come to the powerful connections that William of Chatham made by his marriage, and recollect that the elder branch of the Pitts of Strathfieldsaye were also engaged successfully in their race to the peerage (which George Pitt reached as Baron Rivers in 1776), we shall then understand that the breed of Thomas the Diamond King had wormed themselves firmly into the solid oak of British society. It so happened that the two Williams succeeded to very little of old Thomas's material wealth: but he left them a network of powerful relations, and a family tradition which began as the business of trading in India and finished (after the two Williams had splattered it with rhetoric) as the Imperial tradition of the British Empire.

It is so easy to understand how this theory of the British Empire became the gospel tidings that the Pitts brought to the people of England. It was clear, after their example, that there was no better trade for ambitious youths than sailing on merchant adventures beyond the seas. Thomas had gripped the secret of money-making; he had turned Dick Whittington and his cat from an almost forgotten romance to a fresh reality which was not sober fact but very golden indeed. We might almost call Thomas Pitt the first great merchant prince of modern England—with due apologies to Dick aforesaid and Sir John Philpot; to the Poles, who even became dukes, and Sir Thomas Gresham: who all were pioneers of English commerce. But Pitt stands out from them in that the time was now ripe for the greatest merchant prince to assert his right to make his grandchildren Prime Ministers of their country—Ministers who would put into theoretical form what their grandparent had merely practised in everyday life. Thomas had gone into Parliament, as we have noted, and had quite deliberately used his power to further his private affairs. It all seemed quite frank. He had bought the most notoriously corrupt borough in England—Old Sarum—surely a sufficiently obvious symbol of his intentions and utilitarian morals.

It was the colossal nature of his success that caused a change in the family tactics. Thomas had become so rich that his sons and grandsons were no longer merchant adventurers but county families: their relatives were no longer merely in the manors and the City, but in the peerage. Now, if there was one thing the Pitts thoroughly valued it was the worldly advantages of pomp and pride. To become quite vulgarly colloquial for a moment, one would whisper the word "swank" to denote a very important part of the Pitt inheritance. So when they became county families they knew how to live up to the part. As they were no longer traders they had to find another outlet for the ambition and self-seeking of their race. And what more natural than that they should take to the gentleman's trade of getting a Government post and ruling their inferiors? Their far-seeing ancestor had provided them with parliamentary seats, of so corrupt a nature that public opinion could scarcely reach the biggest fool or the blackest knave who held them. It was obvious that the Pitt boys must go into Parliament, and rule England for their own good as their grandfather had ruled India for his. There was no change of principle; it was only a change of circumstances. Every quality which Thomas had found so useful in his Indian adventures was now to make the William Pitts a still bigger success in London.

Thomas Pitt had not worried his fellow-citizens with many public ideals; it was sufficient for him that he could make a fortune behind the bulwark of the English national reputation, without building on that fact a gigantic political theory of the British Empire and its place in the world. This theory was the life-work of the two Williams. They preached to their countrymen the somewhat fantastic doctrine that if all England could do what their grandfather had done in India, then Englishmen would become the richest race in the world, and England would become the greatest of all the nations. The doctrine certainly seemed most plausible—for Thomas Pitt had been very rich and very powerful; and if the multiplication-table system were applied to him there was really no saying how big the result might be. This, indeed, was the very centre of the Pitt doctrine of the British Empire. It might have been issued as a pamphlet: "Hints to a Young Nation: How to Get Rich Quickly. By Those who have Succeeded." One can imagine the whole idea being developed to-day by a smart set of American advertisers. They would turn the British Empire into a company on the latest principles of centralized management; the Board of Education would become a sort of commercial college for training its clerks and typists; while the diplomats would become its commercial travellers. One does not mean to say that such a Foreign Office, for example, would be any more harmful than the gentlemen we keep there to-day. Even a lot of commercial travellers would have possessed enough wit to warn us that the greatest European War was coming rather more than five minutes before it started. But that by the way.

The main point to emphasize is that the Pitts' political theory of a British Empire—the foundation of which is their main fame in English history—was nothing but their grandfather's experience as an Indian trader translated into the more select language that is considered good form in parliamentary circles. It was making the Pitt method the model for the national method. It was turning a merchant's office into a national council chamber. Not having much original brain-power, and being both educated in the narrowest of schools, it was perhaps only natural that the two Pitt Ministers should hastily conclude that a system which had made the fortunes of their family must necessarily make the fortune of the English nation. If Thomas had been able to get possession of stolen diamonds sneaked from slaves, why should not Englishmen as a race start laying their hands on everything within reach? It paid the Pitts a thousandfold. Why should it not pay England?

Being men of inferior mental calibre, they were never able to analyse the economic position. They really thought that it had added to the wealth of England when grandfather Pitt had been able to buy so many manors. Being exceedingly childlike in their thoughts—however roguish their actions and speeches may seem at times—being so childlike, they probably failed to realize that the aforesaid manors had been there before Thomas bought them; he had not added them to the wealth of England; and the rest of Englishmen were not any the wealthier because Thomas collected their rents. As for the diamond, the French got that, for what it was worth; and, on the capital Pitt acquired by its sale, Englishmen had to pay interest by their labours on the Pitt estates and on the Pitt investments. But the Pitts knew little of the principles of political economy—an ignorance they share with most politicians to-day. They did not think out these facts in detail. They merely became obsessed with a rhetorical faith that the Pitt system was good for everybody everywhere. The world in their emotional brains became a great diamond mine and spice field, where the prizes would fall to the men and nations that were most ruthless and energetic, as their grandfather had been in India. He had cared little for law or other people's convenience: and the Pitts believed England could be great if it cared as little for other nations as he had cared for his trading rivals.

We shall not find much in the career of the two Williams which is not clearer in the life of Thomas; partly because he was a cleverer man than either of the other two; partly because he can be judged by his deeds. Whereas, so much about the two Williams is rhetoric. It is quite a simple thing to judge one of Robert Walpole's frank speeches: we may not agree with it, but at least we can treat it as something solid. It is not like handling butter on a hot day in July; it does not leave us with the sensation of having got the handle of the spoon covered with the treacle—which is one's mental condition after examining a speech by the Pitts, in which there is usually more style than matter.

Perhaps there was a good reason for rhetoric taking the place of facts. What the Pitts had to do was to persuade the people of England that it was to their advantage to raise armies, and incidentally be killed in them, in order that they might win territories which would give fat posts to the county gentlemen's sons and fat dividends to the City merchants when they developed them for trade. Stated so baldly, it is clear that it would not have been a popular cry. It might have been good enough to win votes in the Houses of Parliament, because the members were chosen by a very little group of the nation—although the Hanoverian Houses were a good deal more independent than the Commons of this present century. Even Pitt could not blurt out the whole truth; he had to wrap it up in pretty colours. We may even admit that he probably did not know he was talking weak logic and bad economics; for, it is again necessary to insist, both the Pitts were badly educated men. They were therefore in the happy position of being able to talk rubbish without knowing it, just as a child can swallow powders in jam. They probably convinced themselves by their own rhetoric, for they were the very embodiments of self-satisfaction.

The position of the Pitts will be seen to have been exceedingly precarious, if we consider it for a moment. The whole gist of their political gospel was the growth and prosperity of the British Empire as a trading concern. Of course, the Earl of Chatham, being a very fine gentleman who liked to imagine that he had all the attributes of a Roman senator (being insufficiently educated he did not know what exceedingly shady persons most of the senators of Rome were), could not crudely talk of trade. So his pet hobby was spinning flowing periods about Liberty and the other abstract virtues—at least, they have generally remained abstract in political circles. Chatham was one of those heroic persons who disdain to count the cost—to others. When Clive's father came to tell the great War Minister how his son knew a place in India where a treasure was hid, a treasure that would pay off the National Debt, Pitt said fifty millions would be sufficient. "Lord, sir," said the old man, "consider, if your administration lasts, the National Debt will soon be two hundred millions." It was a dainty stroke against this reckless gambler who could not keep count of his losses. But perhaps that was why he was adored by the City bankers: he gave them such a splendid scope for investment in gilt-edged national debts. Nevertheless, the very core of the Pitts' gospel for England was economic and financial. Now, if we turn to that profoundly impartial book the *Dictionary of National Biography* (which is a foretaste of the Judgment Book itself, for the solemnity and justice of its verdicts), it is a little alarming to be told: "Chatham knew nothing of financial or commercial matters. He never applied himself steadily to any branch of knowledge, and was not even familiar with the rules of the House of Commons. He appears to have confined his reading to a small number of books, and according to his sister, 'knew nothing accurately except Spenser's *Fairy Queen*.'" It is startling to be told that the British Empire was nursed through its long-clothes period by a gentleman whose main qualification was an accurate knowledge of the *Fairy Queen*. The impossibility of the whole matter arouses one's deepest suspicions—makes one suspect that things were not what they seemed. It is clear that the *Fairy Queen* is not a complete clue to the influence of the Pitts; we must search elsewhere.

The Pitt Myth has it that the father and son were a couple of high-souled patriots who inspired England by the purity of their devotion and saved her by the matchless perfection of their intellects. If this statement contains any truth, it is in the proportions of one needle to the haystack—indeed, it is scarcely worth searching for it. In sober fact, Chatham's largest asset was a consummate power of acting—he could play so perfectly that it is his kindest and safest defence to say that he generally deceived himself. As for his son, it is more difficult to say what was his greatest quality—unless it be that he was sufficiently great to conceal how small he was. His conduct of the Revolutionary Wars, as we shall see, was one long tale of muddle-headed mismanagement. It is possible that one of these days, instead of continuing to accept what the orthodox historians have said about the mythical Pitts, the student will consider a few facts in their careers and dismiss some of the fancies. When the fancies are gone the Pitts will not seem nearly such attractive figures.

William Pitt the Elder only got £200 a year out of the family fortunes, and he was compelled to live on his wits. They would not have carried him to any great fortune, but his old school-friends at Eton, the Grenvilles and the Lyttletons, soon turned out to be as accomplished a gang of office-hunters and political intriguers as the rather innocent Pitt could desire. They were the young gentlemen-on-the-make who were to be the accomplices of the City merchants in this great scheme of a British Empire which was to provide posts for the one and dividends for the other. They were not even the young gentlemen who did the fighting: they stayed safely at home and took the profits; for example, they controlled the Admiralty instead of fighting in the ships. In short, they were accomplished politicians of the smaller kind. They supported their convictions or repudiated them exactly as they found it convenient at the moment. They have not been accused of any great political crimes; they were rather amiable cynics and men of the world, that is, they got as much of it for themselves as they could. They were just the men to run a British Empire.

The Grenvilles persuaded their uncle, Lord Cobham, to give their friend William a cornetcy in the Blues—this was his first modest share in the British Empire. Then he entered Parliament for the family seat at Old Sarum. He had already tried to get himself into the public view by writing a "Letter on Superstition, addressed to the People of England." Note that Pitt had begun to lecture the people as if he were already Prime Minister and Archbishop in one; which was so like a Pitt. Walpole soon measured this group of political adventurers at their true value, and christened them the "Boy Patriots" or the "Cobham cousinhood." Later on he flung in their teeth exactly how he despised them: "A patriot, sir! Why, patriots spring up like mushrooms. I could raise fifty of them within the four-and-twenty hours. I have raised many of them in one night. It is but refusing to gratify an unreasonable or insolent demand, and up starts a patriot. There is not a man amongst them whose particular aim I am not able to ascertain, and from what motives they have entered into the lists of opposition." We must not think they were unreasonable men. In Pitt's case there were exactly ten thousand reasons why he should attack Walpole with the noisy yapping of a cur attacking a St. Bernard. For Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, had promised him in her will that number of golden sovereigns, and the chance of a huge reversionary estate, if he would help her petty spite against the great Minister. The servile Pitt—for servile he was, for all his Roman-senator posturing—changed his tone very quickly after the Duchess was dead and the money safe in his keeping. Contemporaries were under no delusions as to Pitt; he was to them a real person, not a myth—and this real man was expressed quite crudely in the political squibs of the day. Here is one of them:

When from an old Woman by standing his Ground
He had got the possession of ten thousand Pound,
He said that he cared not what others might call him,
He would show himself now the true son of Sir Balaam.

When Balaam was poor he was full of Renown,
But now that he's rich he's the jest of the Town;
Then let all men learn by his foul disgrace
That Honesty's better by far than a Place.

The title of this embarrassing production of the rhymer's art was "The Unembarrassed Countenance." It would be impossible to sum up more precisely the essence of the elder Pitt's public career. It was his colossal impudence. He could contradict to-day what he had sworn yesterday; and to-morrow declare that he was right both times. Mark Twain once wrote that man is the only animal that blushes. William Pitt did not come within the definition; for he never blushed.

The early history of the elder Pitt is the story of a man who was building himself a political position with scarcely an inward glance at his conscience or a moment's thought for the welfare of others. A mass of overheated emotions, he found very quickly that his great asset was the power of flamboyant speech. In other circles of life he would have gone on the travelling stage of melodrama. With the advantage of Eton behind him he could do better than a travelling company. He could take part in the permanent national theatre of Westminster, with Lyttleton and the Grenvilles. The method was well recognized: had he not at Eton been soaked in the Greek and Roman orators with that very intention?—just as a boy at the technical schools is deliberately taught woodwork or printing, so that he may become a carpenter or a printer. We must give William Pitt and his old school all due credit; the one was a most excellent pupil and the other a most efficient master. Pitt became the most skilful actor that the Houses of Parliament have seen—and they are the houses of actors. Pitt knew all the tricks of the trade: he could "make up" better than anyone else. When he knew he had a poor case in logic, he played to the emotions. He would appear in the House swathed in bandages, the heroic patriot who never would forsake his country, be his gout in its last agony. Carried to the door by his servants—one feels certain that Pitt had got the idea from an old Roman fresco—he would crawl to his seat aided by his friends inside the bar. On the hottest of days he would pile on the more blankets, if the picture could be improved thereby. His speeches would glance sideways, as it were, at his grievous physical state. But it will be replied that he really had gout. True; and never did the lame and blind beggars in the street so cleverly turn their deformities into a source of income.

But the best of actors must have some sort of lines for his tongue: it cannot be all gesture or sound—though the devotees of the Russian ballet may dispute the generalization. Perhaps it will suffice to say that a great actor must have a passionate part, at least if he be of the melodramatic school of the Pitts and the Burkes. Pitt quickly found his particular passion—which he was so soon to tear to ribbons. He took for his theme just what we would have expected the grandson of Thomas, the Diamond King and Indian merchant prince, to choose. He chose the poem of the British Empire. In his mind it became that dream of romance that her first lover is to the schoolgirl. It was emotion painted with rainbows and sweetened with the honey of hysteria. The British Empire became Pitt's master passion: he adored it without reason; he would appear, if we may judge by his conduct, to have thought that to reason of his mistress was to slight her honour. He ruled England by a whirlwind of rhetoric. It was the method and mind of the gushing schoolgirl translated to suit the habits of a very pompous gentleman whose chief characteristics were ambitious pride and gout. But there is one qualification that must be made, lest any should think this criticism too harsh. In judging the career of this man whom the historians find to be one of the most ideal of English statesmen, it is necessary to remember that, in the medical sense, he was not entirely sane. Sir Andrew Clark, a great modern doctor, who considered his history from the professional point of view, has given the following verdict: "Suppressed gout disordered the whole nervous system and drove him into a state of mental depression varying with excitement and equivalent to insanity." We have to face the fact (surely a sufficiently curious one) that this historians' hero was half a madman. It certainly is a useful clue to Pitt's political philosophy; but it is strange that the historians should have risked so many of their eggs in such a frail basket. But that is their affair to explain: the worship of the half insane will scarcely appeal to the more scientific students.

This half-madman's dream of a British Empire was of course neither a romance nor a dream in its origin. It was the very cool plan of a small group of financiers and merchants who desired the world, or as much of it as possible, for their trading ground. Imperialism is the creed of bankers and commercial travellers; and the tools of their accomplishment are the high-spirited boys who are half educated at Eton and Harrow. And where would one have more hopefully sought this creed than from the mouth of a Pitt? His grandfather had proved that the gospel was better than a gospel—it was a paying proposition. The grandson had learned his part of the transaction—the pure sentiment—at the proper schools. He was just the creature to put the Imperialist case into that attractive language which could persuade the English nation that what had been good for a Pitt was necessarily good for a People. Of course the argument would not bear the weight of logic for a moment: it was economically impossible for every Imperialist to find another Pitt Diamond, or if they had all found one, then the value would have been somewhere near the price of the best coal instead of the best jewels. So Imperialism's only hope was a screen of rhetoric and highfalutin. Pitt was the supreme man for the task. He persuaded his fellow-countrymen that they must make the family fortunes of many more families, like unto the successful Pitts—then, by some strange process, not fully revealed, Englishmen would become happy and great. Such was the gospel of the British Empire: and many honest men have fought and died for it. But then many honest men have worshipped false gods.

William Pitt reached that final triumph of the great actor: he convinced himself. It would be too grotesque to believe anything else. One has moments of ungenerous scepticism, of tempestuous doubts of Pitt's sincerity, when, again and again, one comes across cases where the lowest self-seeking seems the only plausible reason for his deeds. When he attacked Walpole, for instance, because the Duchess of Marlborough offered him ten thousand pounds. Is there any definition of patriotism which will cover that, and many similar actions, where he opposed, when seeking office, exactly what he carried into practice immediately office was granted him ? When it suited his game he denounced the subsidies to foreign States ; when the cards demanded it, he was ready to double them. He cursed Walpole, in the manner of the best tragedian, for being ready to make terms with Spain instead of crushing her by arms ; yet, when Carteret succeeded Walpole, with a fiercer war policy, Pitt and his friends began shrieking again, because Carteret tried to make military use of our alliance with Hanover. Being a sentimentalist, apparently Pitt preferred to fight a war without allies. Carteret was denounced as "an execrable Minister who seemed to have drunk the potion described in poetic fiction which made men forget their country." Hanover was merely "a despicable electorate." When the Pelhams turned out Carteret and continued his policy, it was Pitt who came to their rescue in 1745 ; and with many bandages and threats of dying before their eyes, told the House of Commons that there really had been a difference in policy—though nobody could see it ! In short, Pitt used his rhetoric for any cause that promised most for his political future.

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The Spanish War was perhaps the watershed between the tolerant internationalism of Walpole and the intolerable imperialism of Pitt and his school. It is typical of Pitt's whole career, and may be taken as a test case. Walpole, as we have seen, was not a pirate by nature ; he was a gentleman ; he believed that England should become great and rich, but by ways of reasoning and diplomacy, without antagonizing the world, without wasting treasures of munitions and blood. When it was quite possible that Walpole might have come to some satisfactory compromise with Spain, Pitt started shrieking like a child that has been frightened beyond control. When England's imperial place in the world was in debate Pitt was hysterical—there is scarcely any other word that will meet the case. If the name of our great rivals, the Bourbons, was mentioned, then Pitt "saw red"—there is no other phrase. Now, a man that "sees red" is altogether admirable in the front trenches; but is it quite wise to put him on the general staff? Are our historians well advised when they classify Pitt as a great statesman, when half his life he was charging over the fields of political battle with his eyes almost leaving their sockets? Remember, that is not an exaggerated picture of Pitt's psychology. There were moments when his mental progress was appallingly like a mad dog racing down the middle of the road. In the case of the Spanish War, he was so blinded by passion that he told the House that there was no danger in doing what we pleased, for Spain would not fight! In other words, he had not the slightest conception of the facts; for Spain did fight. The man who was shrieking for war in 1739 had been yelling to reduce the army in 1738—just because it seemed an opportunity for opposing Walpole. When they had driven Walpole into war, the "Patriots" still shrieked; for it was not war they wanted—it was office. Pitt actually demanded that the instructions to the admirals should be published. It is not usual for a statesman to call for the publication of the plan of campaign. Even a drummer-boy would hesitate to do that.

The explanation of Pitt is partly his conceit that he was always right and partly his want of brains. Being a sentimentalist, he built up a little collection of general principles—which were really not principles at all, but mainly rash generalizations of the ways of the small world that surrounded Mr. Pitt and his friends—whence, for example, this creed of the British Empire. Then, again, there were those first principles for successful politicians which the Whigs had used so cleverly to float them down the turbulent stream of the Revolution of 1688. There were all those phrases about Liberty of the Subject, Liberty of Parliament, and the rest of them, which were more pious than practical in their effects. But what was good enough to put the Whig aristocrats and City merchants in the seat of government was in Pitt's eyes good enough to keep them there, including himself. So that sacred phrase, Liberty of the People, is thick in Pitt-oratory. It burst forth in its full glow during the quarrel with the Americans.

Then Pitt tore the passion to ribbons with many a palatial gesture; but how much he was in earnest when he thundered for liberty for the colonists may be judged when we remember that his last great speech was an equally tempestuous cry that, fall the heavens, rise the earth, we must never give the States independence: "My lords, His Majesty succeeded to an Empire as great in extent as its reputation was unsullied. Shall we tarnish the lustre of this nation by an ignominious surrender of its rights and fairest possessions?" When the colonists had first thrown down the challenge to our rule, Pitt had railed at the Government because it would not repeal the Stamp Act, but he added: "At the same time let the sovereign authority of this country over the Colonies be asserted in as strong terms as can be devised, and be made to extend to every point of legislation whatsoever, that we may bind them in their trade, confine their manufactures and exercise every power whatsoever—except that of taking their money out of their pocket without their own consent." Considering that such a policy had as much chance of appeasing the Americans as throwing a chocolate to a man-eating tiger, it is clear that in this great incident of his career Pitt played the part of an innocent child. Mr. Lecky has called attention to the fact that Pitt, until the last moment, seemed unaware that the Stamp Act was of the slightest importance one way or another: "There is not the smallest evidence that either Pitt or Cumberland or any of the other statesmen who were concerned in the negotiations were conscious that any serious question was impending in America." The normal historian who writes so respectfully of the statesmen of the eighteenth century does not seem aware that the greater number of them were such incompetent persons that they would have brought a coffee-stall to bankruptcy. But that is a longer story.

The man who talked of satisfying the Americans by fine phrases of abstract liberty, and defied them in the next speech, was not a statesman. But the same loose romanticism peeps out from every thought of the man. Burke—no mean judge of the sentimental, surely—tells us of

Chatham: "The least peep into the royal closet intoxicated him." Indeed, he was drunk with romantic fancies all his life—except when he was a sound realist in pursuit of a good office as quickly as he could get it. But even then he played the virtuous knight. He wallowed in the luxury of the thought that he, William Pitt, was unspotted by the world. When the Boy Patriots voted for the subsidies which they had before denounced as treachery to their country, Lyttleton and the Grenvilles were too ashamed of themselves to go beyond a silent vote: but Pitt had the calm conceit to imagine that he could explain his conduct in a speech. The contemptuous pamphlets of the day show how he failed; but it is doubtful if this sublime egotist really saw how foolish he appeared: just as, dressed in the robes of his new earldom, perhaps he never realized how the City merchants were pointing with angry jeers at the man who had protested for a generation that he served his country without desire for honour or reward.

But Pitt's personal character is a little matter—in more senses than one. What was of infinite account was that this unbalanced intellect, this creature at the sport of every emotion, by the freak of fortune got control of the State of Great Britain. Empire-building was in part a sport, in part a fancy to him; sometimes merely an agreeable theme for the office-hunter and party politician; a war or a peace might easily hang on a petty twist of his thoughts. Choiseul, the French Prime Minister, wrote: "What we fear is that this proud and ambitious man, having lost the popular favour, may wish to recover from his fall by warlike exploits." A fairly damning thing, surely, when the Prime Ministers of Europe, writing private instructions to their ambassadors (as Choiseul was doing in this letter), should seriously estimate that Chatham might go to war because the City of London had pointed contemptuously at his new coronet. Was Pitt so dull-witted that he did not realize what war meant, or who paid the price of it? Did he really not know who was getting the spoils? It was surely no secret. Lord Chesterfield knew quite well when he wrote: "The point of profit is more important than the point of honour with our military dignitaries. Provided they can avoid defeat, they are ready also to avoid victory, as either event would deprive them of their incomes." Chesterfield was not writing vaguely, he had the courage to name his man, for he continued: "Lord Loudoun, a disgustingly avaricious character, has perhaps thought, indeed I may say actually did think, that a victory would be disadvantageous to him, as likely to put an end both to the war and to his enormous receipts." That—like the Pitt Diamond—was one of the most direct results of the Pitts' wild adventures in building up a British Empire; and if Chatham was so simple as not to know it, then he seems to have little right to all the carols that have been rung (with a few honourable exceptions) from almost every historical belfry in his praise.

Let the student read again the facts of Chatham's life, apart from the comments of those whose business it is to pass historical judgments; and let him candidly ask himself whether Pitt was really a great man. That he was picturesque is granted: but his were the trappings of melodrama rather than of statesmanship. A fine figure of a man indeed, a man for the pageants and ceremonies; full of all the arts that show best in the limelight. With our whole hearts we may exclaim, "Mais quel geste!" But when we have said that, is there very much more left to be said of the Earl of Chatham? After a century of historical eulogies we have forgotten the thinly veiled contempt with which this rhetorical Earl was regarded by his contemporaries who knew him at first hand. Horace Walpole probably gives us the true estimate when he wrote on Chatham's death: "Well, with all his faults, Lord Chatham will be a capital historic figure. . . . I shall certainly not go to the funeral. I go to no puppet shows. . . . He is already as forgotten as John of Gaunt. . . . The late appearance of enthusiasm about Lord Chatham was nothing but a general affectation. It was a convention of hypocrisy . . . which did not last even until his burial."

If Chatham is a disappointment, his younger son is as unsubstantial as a shadow cast on a sea mist. He is only the shadow of a shadow. In historical fact he was merely the echo of a dead voice; we can say still more exactly, the understudy of a great actor. The day had come when there should have been a brief notice at the door of the Westminster Theatre: "Owing to the death of the Earl of Chatham, the part of God of England will henceforward be played by Mr. William Pitt, junior." It would be impossible for the most precise of scientific historians to get nearer to the truth by any more ponderous explanations in terms of laws, or economics or political phrases. The Pitts were not much concerned with legislation; of the rules of economics even their worst enemies never accused them; they could scarcely have written a rational paragraph on the science of government. When the elder Pitt died, one statesman did not give place to another. Only a great actor died and was succeeded by his understudy.

Old Thomas Pitt had possessed the best brains and energy of his family. Chatham had a large share of energy, even if he was not blessed by the good fairies with brains. But compared with his younger son, Chatham was quite a monumental erection. He rushed into war with the chaotic energy of a bull, but he certainly did know how to use his horns. He was a child in politics, but when it came to planning a campaign that required nerve and imagination, then the elder Pitt was no fool, as his foreign enemies could best judge. But his son, who by some miraculous intervention of historical writers has got the reputation of saving England from the French, was, in fact, one of the most incompetent war administrators that even this badly administered nation has ever endured. Mr. Fortescue, the first in position of our military historians, has summed up the position in brief words which would have annihilated the reputations of most statesmen: "In 1796 Pitt had squandered in his military operations tens of thousands of men and millions of money to no purpose whatever; and had acquired, with the exception of the Cape of Good Hope, nothing but pestilential tropical islands, many of them hopelessly devastated, and all more deadly than war itself to the British soldiers. France was not appreciably weaker for all his efforts; whereas England was left literally without an army." Mr. Fortescue continues that Pitt had "studiously neglected both the Navy and the Army . . . the private soldier had, in fact, no alternative but to starve or desert, for his pay was too slight to keep him alive. This is no exaggeration, but the literal truth. Yet Pitt took no notice of the matter whatever. . . . Not till January 1792 was a small pittance granted to ameliorate the lot of the British soldier, and then only by direct intervention of the King. . . . The state of the Navy was even worse." In the case of anyone but a Pitt, this might have been ascribed to a cultured horror of war and a flat refusal to be responsible for it. But that a Pitt should neglect the Army and Navy when the family believed in very little else but brute force—that a Pitt should leave the soldiers and sailors out of his scheme was as astonishing and unnatural as if the angels had forgotten virtue or the devils had neglected to encourage vice. It was flying in the face of their destiny.

The story of the military plans of the younger Pitt reads rather like the marching of troops in a comic opera than the operations of real war. He scattered his small armies all over the world because he had not enough knowledge to discover where they would be most usefully concentrated. When he sent an expedition to Toulon, it was of three thousand men; he might as well have sent three dozen, for he was clearly told that fifty thousand were necessary to do the work. But he had no more to send, for the rest were spread in every imaginable corner of the earth where it was tolerably certain they would be caught and killed by fever before they had caught or killed their enemy.

But there is little cause for surprise that Pitt was neither ready for the war nor capable of planning it if he had been prepared. He had been bred in a world of dreams, not the world of reality. His education was not unlike the simple process of blowing up a toy balloon with gas. Poor little William had pumped into him every vaporous sentiment that could be blended with the art and theory of governing England. He was taught that his father had served his country as no one had served it so well before; and the son set out on the same mission with his teeth firmly set, as a ballet-dancer comes on to the stage with a firmly set smile. He was the son of his father, for he was trained as the first sentimentalist in Europe; his mother's part in him seems to have been to give him so fragile a body that he could not even be sentimental with vigour. At the age of eleven this is how the precious young hope of England was writing: "The views were enough enlivened thereby to prevent the drowsy Morpheus from taking the opportunity of the heat to diffuse his poppies upon the eyes of the travellers." A boy who wrote like that was fairly certain to grow up a prig and a fool. And the young Pitt fulfilled every promise of his youth. Scarcely once did he touch earth all the time he was governing England. He was living in the poppy-world of his boyish letter. In the world of romance he would make an attractive figure in a domestic comedy—the young man who is too sickly to succeed. When the great war with France was on the verge of eruption, the Prime Minister of England, from all that can be discovered in his papers and despatches, seems to have been unconscious of its imminence. The immediate safety of England turned on the action of Holland; and Pitt seems to have been unaware that there was a Dutch crisis at all. He was down at Hollwood planting trees in his new garden. It reminds us of the days when his father did not realize that there was any chance of a war with America.

Pitt has been praised by some for his liberality of thought because he hesitated so long before declaring war against the new Government of France: it is suggested that he was a lover of liberty at heart, and that it was an unwilling fate that made him interfere with the internal affairs of a neighbouring people. The historians who have built up the picture of this ideal Pitt surely must see that it was, at the beginning, all to the good of England—in a Jingo sense, and England at that time meant the rule of Jingo politicians and manufacturers—that France should tear herself to pieces, and so be weaker in trade and in empire.

The coldest-blooded of autocrats and plutocrats in England must have been glad to see the beginning of the French Revolution—for, being also very short-sighted persons, they were unable to see that beginnings sometimes have ends, and the end might not necessarily be in France, but on this side of the disinfecting Channel. So Pitt as a kindly critic of France when she first burst into flames was quite in keeping with the most orthodox supporter of the British Constitution and the British Empire. But when he thought that the people of this country were interested in the Revolution, not as rivals but as sympathetic friends, then he, who pretended to be so calm and dignified, took panic, and began to hit out wildly on every side, as a police constable sometimes loses his head in a crowd. Pitt began to throw overboard all his professed ideals of Civil Liberty and Reform, as a fine lady would throw overboard her jewels to lighten a sinking boat. He rushed through a Traitorous Correspondence Bill; he suspended the Habeas Corpus Act; he flooded the land with spies; a Treasonable Practices Act, a Seditious Meetings Act; endless prosecutions of supposed revolutionaries: such were the signs of Pitt's terror and the shallowness of his love of liberty. His Liberalism disappeared into the abyss of the Revolution as a stone sinks into the sea; and it scarcely left even a bubble or two on the surface to mark the place of its grave. There would have been a reasonable case for maintaining that the French Revolution was not the friend of Democracy, but rather the tool of the new Plutocrats. But it would be absurd to think that the leader of English Plutocracy had any such views when he eventually declared war on the new spirit in France. Pitt was afraid of the French Revolution because he thought it really did mean the beginning of Democracy. He had not sufficient knowledge to suspect that the Terror was mainly the work of a few self-seeking adventurers.

Pitt's career was marked by the tombstones of those idols that it had pleased his family to set up for worship in their ancestral temple. There was the tradition that they were the sworn opponents of corruption in Parliament.

The younger Pitt clung to power by turning the House of Lords into a palace for the bribed. When he first took office there were scarcely 250 peers in the House: in nineteen years Pitt had added 140 more. As Disraeli said: "He made peers of second-rate squires and fat graziers. He caught them in the alleys of Lombard Street and clutched them from the counting-houses of Cornhill." He is said to have spent one-sixth of his time dealing with applications for offices and titles. He gained a reputation for occasionally standing up to men who threatened him with revenge if he would not grant their requests; but the House of Lords, as the home of modern Plutocracy, remains to this day as the best proof of how often Pitt did not resist these threats. The Pitts were the founders of the British Empire; and the rule of the Rich, which was always the clear intention of that Imperialism, has its monument in Pitt's House of Lords. The Pitts founded Plutocracy as a vital political force.

Then, again, there was that tradition that the Pitts were fearless in stating their views. It is a sadly moth-eaten story, and there never was much in it. But it had been at least a plausible tale in the days of the Earl of Chatham; for he thundered so loudly in the Houses of Parliament that it really sounded as though he were defying Jupiter and all Olympus. As a matter of fact, he was usually not doing much except tear his own convictions of last week, or last month, into ribbons—but he made so much noise that the details of the argument were generally lost in the tumult. Be that as it may, in the case of the younger Pitt, nobody could say that he was ready to die for his convictions. His life is the story of how he ran away from them whenever they were put to the practical test. Take the case of Catholic Emancipation. Pitt had given a pledge, which an honourable man would have held binding, that if the Irish accepted the Union, Catholic Emancipation would immediately follow. But Pitt weakly allowed himself to be tossed from one position to another until it was too late to make any stand in defence of his promise; and, finally, he behaved like a coward by giving the King a pledge that he would not raise the question of emancipation again during his reign. He certainly had the decency to resign: but a man of honour does not pledge himself not to fulfil his pledges—which was what Pitt had done by his promise to the King. Even if we look at the incident from the standpoint of the Constitution, is it not somewhat strange that it should be a Pitt—one of this family that has got into our history-books as the builders of the theory of parliamentary government—that it should be one of this race that in the beginning of the nineteenth century should surrender the hardly won rights of the previous century; when it was decided (one is told) that it was the Ministers and the Houses of Parliament who governed England, and not an absolute monarchy. For that, surely, was what Pitt surrendered by his promise to George III. Once more, this younger Pitt pursued the craven course of running away from his family traditions as well as his pledge. But, in truth, the traditions of the Pitts were as imaginary as their promises.

Ireland gives us another disillusion concerning the moral courage of the younger Pitt. The most Tory historians, the most bigoted of Protestants, have admitted that the behaviour of English administrators and English armies in suppressing the Irish rebellions during Pitt's ministry was an unforgivable blot on the English name. Let no one imagine that it was in keeping with the ethics of the age, and therefore not so horrifying to its contemporaries as to ourselves. On the contrary, it revolted every decent man, soldier or civilian, who knew what was happening in Ireland. Sir John Moore wrote in 1797 that he had "seen in Ireland the most absurd, as well as the most disgusting tyranny that any nation ever groaned under"; and he was ignored. When Ralph Abercrombie arrived to command the operations, he declared in a general order to his men that: "The conduct of the troops in this kingdom proved the army to be in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to everyone but the enemy." Pitt at once took the side of the scoundrels, and Abercrombie was compelled to resign. Then Cornwallis arrived as both Lord Lieutenant and Commander-in-Chief, and his verdict was: "The Irish Militia are totally without discipline, contemptible before the enemy when any serious resistance is made to them, but ferocious and cruel in the extreme when any poor wretches with or without arms come within their power." Such were the methods by which Pitt's Government was ruling Ireland; and one can only ask whether Pitt would have disregarded so many warnings if he had not been a great deal of a coward and an accomplice in the crime. It is full time that the whole vocabulary of the English language is used in the history-books; not merely a few colourless words which are supposed to maintain impartial judgment, but which, in fact, so often express a series of deliberate lies. If, for example, we want to tell the truth about English rule in Ireland at this time, we can only say quite frankly that it was the rule of cads and hooligans—and if William Pitt was the First Minister, the necessary inference must be drawn. A man who wanted to govern justly, and had the brains to carry his wishes into action, would not have needed so many protests from his officials before he took action—if indeed Pitt ever did try to do justice to Ireland. He tricked Irishmen, or bribed them wholesale, into a Union; and we have spent over a hundred years recovering from this blind folly of a man who has been trumpeted in the history-books as one of England's greatest statesmen. If the historians have any right to pass judgment dead against the evidence, then the Pitt Myth may be miscalled history: measured against the facts, it seems remarkably near a superstition.

One searches in vain for some certain evidence that a Pitt was ever ready to sacrifice his prospects for the sake of his principles; and the longer one searches the more sceptical one becomes whether he had any principles worth discovering. He had plenty of pretty phrases—but they were the regular stock-in-trade of the Pitt family. History is too often the record of what statesmen have merely said; what shall we call the very different record of what men have actually done? Pitt the Younger talked much of reforming the Constitution, but it ended—in talk. Think of all the rhetoric he poured over the slave trade; yet the fact remains that it was not his life but his death that seemed to clear the way for that measure of reform which passed almost immediately he died. His friend Wilberforce, who has come down in history as so ardent a friend of the oppressed, turns out, on closer inspection, to be not quite what one expected from the historians' eulogies. When the working classes lost their right of trade-union defence, which was taken from them by the two Acts of 1799 and 1800, it was Pitt and Wilberforce who pressed these measures through. For once these "reformers" seem to have been roused to energy: an attack on Capitalism meant danger to the whole social order which these politicians knew to be the basis of their existence. "Owing to Pitt's haste to pass a Bill for repressing Trade Unionism, working men had had no opportunity of making their views known to Parliament before the Bill became law. Next year Parliament was flooded with petitions of protest from all parts of the country," is the summing up of Mr. and Mrs. Hammond in their *Town Labourer*, the most truthful book on the industrial history of this period.

But it would be unreasonable to blame Pitt for not being a social reformer of the modern type. For he had not received any education which allowed him to grasp economic affairs, whether on the side of the rich or the poor. The extraordinary exhibition of his intellect in the matter of the Sinking Fund proves that we are dealing with a mind that was incapable of going beyond the most elementary facts: we are clearly in the presence of a man who had the qualities which give high rank in the world of politicians, but would have put him at the bottom of an average sixth-form class. Pitt thought he had discovered (thanks to Dr. Price) a method by which the National Debt could be paid off by a miracle. He proposed to allot one million pounds of taxes every year to buying Consols; allowing the whole sum to accumulate at compound interest until it reached £4,000,000 interest per annum. This, with the £1,000,000 a year still to be raised by taxation, was to be devoted to buying national bonds at the rate of £5,000,000 a year, on which interest would lapse, "the nominal capital being transferred to the credit of the Commissioners until it amounted to the same sum as the National Debt." So far the scheme was plausible, at least. But the miracle began when Pitt apparently thought that he could raise loans with one hand to pay them off with the other; and that, miracle of miracles, it was even possible to pay off the debt by raising new loans at a higher rate of interest than the loans he was paying off. It is a little difficult to discuss such a scheme patiently. Perhaps the verdict of McCulloch, the economist, may meet the case: "This worthless compound of delusion and absurdity . . . we doubt if the history of the world can furnish another instance of so extraordinary an infatuation." It was William Pitt, the idol of our school histories, who gave this delusion and absurd infatuation to his adoring country as his contribution to the national finance. One rubs one's eyes in amazement. It would seem that if these Pitts are to survive in history they must be measured by the standards of a lunatic asylum, and not by the rules of sane men. For Pitt's Sinking Fund has none of the elements of sanity. The best excuse put forward for him is that he knew he was talking nonsense; that he deliberately fooled the nation in the hope that it would get, in those critical days, an illusion of national security which the Pitt brain was not capable of supplying in fact by sound finance. But such a theory means that the Pitts were a race of charlatans: they should rank not with the statesmen, but with the great conjurers of the music-hall stage. The Sinking Fund is a landmark in the life of Pitt—the historians appearing to think that it is a symbol of his greatness. It is indeed a symbol, but of his futility, not his strength.

It proclaims him as a mere amateur in statesmanship—for Pitt was the lazy lounger to his finger-tips. It is said he rarely rose until midday, and he rarely did any work after he had dined. Perhaps he was wise in this last resolution; for so often after dinner he was helplessly intoxicated. On that memorable day in 1793 when war was declared between England and France, William Pitt arrived at the House of Commons drunk. When Fox was speaking, Pitt was being sick behind the Speaker's chair. He had seen no signs that the greatest war in the world was beginning; he had naturally taken no steps to prepare for what he could not see; a year before, in 1792, he had reduced taxation, which meant that he was preparing for peace, not for war. When the war came, Pitt said it would be "a very short war, and certainly ended in one or two campaigns." When one remembers the brilliant skill and superhuman energy of Carnot and the men who controlled the French War Office, and compares them with this amateur statesman William Pitt, one only wonders that he was not right, and that two campaigns did not see us crushed out of existence. Fortunately, we were able to survive until Pitt was dead, an event which was probably worth many new armies to the British nation. We had to fight through these gravest years under a First Minister who mistook stiff manners for strength and replaced hard thinking by platitudes. Neither in his general conceptions nor in his details did Pitt ever rise above the level of the commonplace. William the Younger was not corrupt; he did not possess enough brains to have kept himself afloat for a week in a life of crime, for crime needs skill of a sort. He was an intellectual nonentity rather than a knave. If he had not been his father's son, English history would never have heard of him. He would have been an ideal small squire, and every thoughtful mother of daughters would have held him up as an ideal husband—for he looked quite a gentleman, even when he was drunk every other evening. We do not yet realize that conceit and an innate capacity for "bounce"—for rising again after any humiliation or mistake—were the main elements that brought fame and fortune to the two Pitts. Intellect and moral character are both negligible factors in their careers. Never in history has the popular estimate wandered so far away from the facts as when the Pitts have been judged by their rhetoric rather than by their deeds. It is time to reconsider them as real beings—not as mythological creations. One has but attempted here to suggest the outlines of their true pictures. With such a hint, the details may be filled in from any history-book—and every one of them will disprove almost every deduction that the orthodox historians have drawn. Instead of deciding, with the historians, that the two Pitts were great statesmen, one is tempted to suspect more than the mere link of a name with that charming lady of Covent Garden Theatre, Ann Pitt, their contemporary. The critics concisely summed her up in a phrase which meets the case of her namesakes in a quite remarkable fashion; for they said that she possessed an "important pertness in manner and a volubility of tongue." When one thinks of Chatham at Westminster, one can draw all kinds of fantastic comparisons with "the best woman comedian in Covent Garden." But one hears the historians shuddering with disgust at such a low thought.

EDMUND BURKE

(1729–1797)

EDMUND BURKE was almost a new genus in the political life of England. He gained himself a position in public affairs because he was capable of thinking and writing—both comparatively new ideas in modern governing circles. It is true that his thoughts were usually wrong and his writings very misleading to the public mind; but the fact remains that this was a new method of climbing into power. Hitherto, history had seemed to prove that statesmanship depended on other qualities. Some men had won their way by the sword; it was one of the most primitive methods, but even as recently as Cromwell and Marlborough it had played a supreme part. Others had been the sons of dukes and such-like stately personages. Chatham and his kind had been superb actors of the melodramatic school. Shaftesbury and the Restoration adventurers had made intrigue a fine art; they knew every step on all the back-stairs. There had even been successes made by sheer brilliancy; there was Carteret, who in the matter of brains might truly be compared with the best Toledo steel. Then Henry Fox had founded a great Liberal family by squeezing every farthing out of every public office he could lay his hands on. While the great Duke of Newcastle had ruled England for a generation for no other reason than that he had so much money and so many parliamentary seats that nobody could outbid him or outvote him. That all such men had unusual intellect of a kind it would be stupid to deny; but it was a mere auxiliary to their main powers.

Burke was in a hopeless position for one ambitious of reaching the governing seat. He had practically nothing but brains to offer his supporters. It was as if he had offered cowries in a land used to a gold coinage. He had neither rank nor a sword nor the intriguing mind. He certainly had a touch of Chatham's melodrama and sentimentality, and he had something that might be called brilliancy. But without that rather heavy quality called "intellect" and that power of plodding application, Burke would have failed. In truth, he did not reach anything of great importance; but for the moment one is comparing him with his political rivals. For it is fairest to judge him as a politician. There have been many attempts to put him amongst the philosophers and the men who write books. It is a dangerous line of defence when Burke is concerned. After all, the greater part of his prime he spent in politics, and his literature was deliberately incidental to that career.

Perhaps the legend of Burke the philosopher grew around that first serious book of his, before he got into the political set. He published *The Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* when he was twenty-seven, and it bears all the symptoms of a pure and unspotted youth. It is altogether important to examine this book if one desires to understand the later Burke; for, as in the case of most men, he really said nothing fundamentally new after his first essay—it is so rare to think of anything fresh after the age of nineteen. There are two or three sentences in this first book that will convict their author of most of the virtues and vices which he afterwards more clearly revealed. Thus, in his section on "Terror" he wrote: "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear." His great work on the French Revolution is only a somewhat unnecessary amplification and proof of that phrase. He was panic-stricken lest the Revolution should spread to England and involve himself and his ruling-class friends in the downfall of their fellows in France. He drove home the same idea in another sentence: "The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature . . . is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended with some degree of horror. In that case the mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. . . . It anticipates our reasoning, and hurries us on by an irresistible force."

That paragraph might well go on Burke's tombstone, for it tells us more about the man than anything else he wrote or did. This first book is a careful study of the manner in which the mind of man is moved: in it we can almost see Burke perfecting himself in the arts by which a politician or an actor or an artist can play on the public keyboard. He tried to discover to a nicety what would affect the mind of the mob or the individual. "To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. . . . These despotic governments which are founded on the passions of men, keep their chief as much as may be from the public eye. The policy has been the same in many cases of religion. Almost all the heathen temples were dark." That was the corner of psychology on which Burke based his whole theory of government by a detached superior governing class. When he wrote, "Magnificence is likewise a source of the sublime," he was anticipating the day when the brilliancy of the Court of Versailles was to dazzle his impressionable eyes and make the splendour of Marie-Antoinette his pivot for the fate of France.

In short, this essay on the Sublime and Beautiful explains why Burke's future political career was that strange mixture of realistic common sense and uncontrolled emotion. The master element in his life was the persistence with which he always allowed his intellect to be overborne by his emotions. Those who are kind to him will say that it proves that he was a great artist. While those who are unkind will declare that it establishes Burke as the greatest sentimentalist among statesmen. As usual, the truth is probably somewhere between. But it must not be forgotten that there is another possibility. When one thinks of his early examination of the emotions of man, the thought arises that perhaps Burke's apparent sentimentalism was as deliberate as the actor's art. This first essay is Burke in his dressing-room. His obvious capacity for close details in reasoning continually shakes the argument that he was by nature as unbalanced as his wilder flights of emotion might suggest. Is it possible that his florid language was a pose, or rather an art, to bend his audience to his will? Heine made even darker suggestions: "Burke possessed only a rhetorical talent wherein he combated, in the second part of his life, the Liberal principles which he had honoured earlier. Did he intend by this change of opinions to gain the favour of the great? Did Sheridan's Liberal triumphs in the chapel of St. Stephen's determine him, out of jealousy and spite, to become champion of the past, of the Middle Ages, which afforded a fertile field for romantic tirades and oratorical figures? Was he a knave or a fool? I cannot tell. But I think that there is always something suspicious when a man's change of principles is to the profit of the reigning power."

But Burke can be fairly easily defended from such a gross charge, for it can be shown that he never possessed those "Liberal principles." He ended as he began: a firm believer in the privileges of the governing set and a humble worshipper under their throne. As for the suggestion that Burke became a champion of the Middle Ages, it exposes the tragic comedy of this statesman's career. Burke's ideal was the Revolution of 1688, and it was that event which finally decided that the Middle Ages had died; scarcely one stone of them was left standing in a hundred years. If the Stuarts had survived it might have been different. But Burke's friends, the Whig plutocrats, made society "modern"; it was Burke's pet Revolution that buried the mediæval traditions that died with Charles. He probably thought that he represented the days of barons and troubadours, and hawking and tilting. But he had only seen the outside of that system and a few of the most alluring of its pictures. Of the real essence of mediæval society Burke was as ignorant as a child. Its fundamental note of local and democratic government was the direct contradiction of Burke's implicit faith and respect for a governing class. Besides, his whole nature was a perpetual clash with the mediæval mind. Remember, he had been educated in a

Quaker school—not the best of seed-beds for a mediæval philosophy! If, in spite of Burke's own phrase, it were possible to indict a whole age for a psychology, it might be said that there was something particularly joyful and a little reckless about the Middle Ages—reckless, that is, in the sense that there was not that continual self-analysis which seems the habit of more modern man. There was more living and less thinking about it, less weighing whether deeds and thoughts were right or wrong.

Now, if ever there were a mind tending to introspection it was Burke's. He would appear to have been everlastingly balancing right and wrong, continually dreading lest he was doing the wrong—sometimes becoming wonderfully ingenious in discovering arguments why it was right. In any case he was of the morose, bitter type, and so quarrelsome at last that his political contemporaries (a fairly tolerant lot) could scarcely abide him. His literary friends seem to have found him more congenial; and good judges of men (being good men themselves) like Samuel Johnson and Joshua Reynolds loved him dearly, perhaps because Burke was genial to everybody who would listen to his never-ending conversation. There we get near the heart of Burke: he was a talker and a thinker, and he was, therefore, not in any way a man likely to be attracted by a mediæval age of action. Be that as it may, Burke was far less of a mediævalist than Heine himself, because the Jew did believe in liberty, whereas the Irishman (reversing the usual order) did not; and democratic liberty was a much more essential part of the Middle Ages than of those highly centralized monarchies of Europe which Burke worshipped on bended knee.

It is a little difficult to choose the best manner of analysing Burke. When a man was essentially a writer and a talker, is it not better to discuss his opinions rather than his life? For is it not fairer to attach more importance to what he said, rather than to what he did? As a matter of fact, there is not much of importance about Burke except what he put down on paper: and it ought to be judged on its merits. Whether he was quite sincere when he wrote—whether, that is, he had deeper objects than the ones he admitted—

is of course an interesting question, but it should not be the main one. Had he been a successful politician his real motives would have revealed themselves by his deeds—and it might have been imperative to weigh them against his words. But Burke was most unsuccessful in active public life. After being the chief intellectual prop of the Whig party for years, giving them a doctrine and helping to rescue them from all their scrapes, when the chance came of rewarding him with a Cabinet office, his patrons' courage failed them. They had discovered Burke to be such a bad-tempered, pig-headed person that it would have made their lives a misery to sit beside him on any committee. They were exceedingly sorry to disappoint him, and they gathered together round dinner tables to see whether they could not risk admitting him. But although it was largely owing to Burke's vigour in the House of Commons that North was compelled to resign in 1781, yet he was not offered a seat in the new Cabinet, and had to be content with the lucrative, but more insignificant, post of Paymaster. Having honestly stuck to his friends and resigned with Fox, he again came in with his friends and regained the same post in the next year. It was then that he defended so violently two clerks in his department who were accused of stealing public moneys. One was convicted, and the other committed suicide: neither of which events can be taken as evidence of innocency. Common talk said that one of them, the suicide, had been connected with the Burkes in some heavy gambling in Indian stock. Anyhow, the political world, not easily shocked by such things, was astounded at Burke's behaviour, seeing that it was one of his poses that he represented all the public and private virtues. So strong was the feeling that when Burke rose to address the House about this time, some of the members left the chamber with such manifest contempt that he sat down without speaking.

Another matter which made his contemporaries a little anxious about Burke's company was the uncertainty where he got the money by which he maintained himself. His brother and his cousin were both desperate gamblers, and, so long as they did well, they appear to have supplied Edmund with cash. But they soon crashed ; and for the last twenty-five years of his life Burke was living far above any apparent income (except during his short term of office as Paymaster). He seems to have had much money given him by his political patrons, all of which gives substance to Heine's suspicions, of course. We must not forget, also, that when Burke was delivering speeches in favour of the American Colonies, he was receiving seven hundred pounds a year as the official agent for New York. A man must live, of course ; and Burke seems mainly to have lived by payments for his political services. It would be hard to prove he ever said anything insincere on that account. His paymasters were only wise in choosing a useful servant. Indeed, he had sufficient spirit to be exceedingly self-willed, and sufficient pride never to press unduly for any office as his reward. Nevertheless, he was not quite the knight-errant of Liberty that he has sometimes been painted.

There is one other matter, and then his more private character can be put on one side for his public writing. In spite of the traditions of his great speeches, they were not, strictly speaking, at all great as rhetoric. Indeed, he bored the House so that he became known as " the dinner-bell " —when all members trooped home. Many of his orations read splendidly, and there are passages of great power. But taken all in all they did not ring true, so contemporaries have recorded. One knows a great deal about Burke after reading Fanny Burney's account of the Warren Hastings trial. Windham had told her that her prepossessions in favour of the prisoner would vanish when she had heard Burke ; she would then hear " truth, reason, justice, eloquence. You will then see in other colours ' that man.' " Miss Burney admired both men so much, the prisoner and the accuser, that she might surely appear as an impartial witness. But in court her sympathies turned definitely to the side of Hastings. She had found Burke in his speech at first " perfectly irresistible " for his charm of style. She wrote of " the eloquence, the imagination, the fire, the diversity of expression, and the ready flow of language with which he seemed gifted, in a most superior manner, for any and every purpose to which rhetoric could lead." Burke's emotional description of "those dreadful murders" almost swept this clever young lady along with the speaker: "He at last overpowered me; I felt my cause lost. . . . My eyes dreaded a single glance towards a man so accused as Mr. Hastings. . . . I had no hope he could clear himself nor another wish in his favour remained." It was but a passing sensation; for when Burke proceeded, and his "charges of rapacity, cruelty, tyranny were general and made with all the violence of personal detestation, and continued and aggravated without any further fact or illustration; then there appeared more of study than of truth, more of invective than of justice; and, in short, so little of proof to so much of passion." Miss Burney began to feel so indifferent, so unconvinced by this rhetorical avalanche, that "I found myself a mere spectator in a public place, and looking all around it with my opera-glass in my hand." She was telling all this to Windham; and it is interesting to note how that professional politician (who was also a gentleman) took this criticism of one of his colleagues: "His eyes sought the ground on hearing this, and with no other comment than a rather uncomfortable shrug of the shoulders, he expressively and concisely said, 'I comprehend you perfectly.'"

The sum of it all is that, in this great moment of his public life, Burke did not ring true. He made his audience think that it was only another night at the play, when the plot was so uninteresting that one had to fall back on the audience. And it is clear that Windham, by that "uncomfortable shrug," admitted the truth of the novelist's keen analysis. Of course, it was mild to what Miss Burney continued to say about Fox, another of these gentlemen who gave to the House of Commons so much time that would have been more appropriately spent behind the footlights. But for the moment we are considering Burke. This criticism of the great speech at the Hastings trial was not an isolated example. The House of Commons only tittered when he flung on its floor the famous dagger that was meant to sum up all the horrors with which the French Revolution threatened England. Burke most obviously did not ring true. Take this case of Warren Hastings, and indeed the whole case concerning India. Burke devoted seven years to the prosecution; and after all that torrent of passion and eloquence—by reason of it, shall we say—the impeached man was acquitted on all the charges. It was a piteous failure for such a gigantic effort. Lord Teignmouth, who knew more about Indian affairs than most people, could only explain Burke's conduct during the trial by advancing the theory that he was not sane. But there was probably a genuine belief in Burke's mind that things happened under British control in India that ought not to happen. He was right, and the trial was a sharp reminder to hesitating adventurers that they must consider the honour of their race when they went fortune-seeking in foreign lands. But that Burke should have fixed on Hastings as a fit example, and that he should have turned a court of justice into a theatre and a politicians' bear-pit, is sufficient proof that he was not the man predestined to represent the national honour. He did not ring true.

It had been the same, a few years before, when Burke was the imposing figure in the demand for the India Bill of 1783. He practically drafted the Bill, and was its chief supporter in the Commons. He did everything that rhetoric could do: but Lord Morley, in his *Life of Burke*, can only sum up: "The whole design was a masterpiece of hardihood, miscalculation and mismanagement." It was so typical of Burke's inconsistencies that, at this time when he was rattling the beams of Westminster Hall by his denunciations of corruption in India, he had just been trying to protect those two criminal clerks in his own public office in London. Further, one did not have to be very much of a cynic to hesitate to give the government of India—as this Bill proposed—into the hands of the ruling politicians. For at this moment these gentlemen were the allies of North and Fox, a combination which had made even the tarnished minds of Westminster begin to consider whether political compromise might not have a boundary to its indecencies. For Burke at this moment to ask Parliament to commit into such hands the government of India—which was not very far from the request—was as if the chief of highway robbers had begged to be made Governor of the Bank of England on his word of honour that he would live as a reformed man. Burke's word would always have been acceptable ; but there would have been a continual dread lest this overstrung rhetorician and uncertain parliamentarian might commit some more of those continual blunders of taste and of fact that he was so ready to commit at home. To quote Lord Morley again : "Indian promotion would have followed parliamentary and party interest." The man who proposed to give India as a perquisite to the politicians of that age had none of the qualities of a philosopher, and very few of the signs of an honest man, the cynic might add.

However, everything about Burke is of secondary importance compared with his relations to the French Revolution, which almost entirely filled the last eight years of his life In 1790 he was sixty-one years of age, and, after all his efforts, he had probably never been so unpopular. He had made a fool of himself during the Regency debates of 1788, when the Whigs hoped to break Pitt's power at last. It was all wasted time, for the King became sane again ; but Burke's hysterical speech would have gone far to ruin the Whigs' chances in any case. As Windham wrote : "He is folly personified, but shaking his cap and bells under the laurels of genius. He finished his wild speech in a manner next to madness. . . . Half the kingdom considered him little better than a madman." Most people would have said that Burke, for good or evil, had finished his work in the world. In fact, he had scarcely begun it, if we measure by effect, and not by time and effort. The Revolution gave Burke his chance, as it were. He was born to be leading counsel in a sensational criminal case—that was his clear destiny. He had tried his hand on Hastings, but after a few years of him the prosecution's case was looking less promising. Burke was now to have another and a far greater chance. This time he was to try—not a single man—but a nation ; and the appeal was to be, not to the court in Westminster Hall, but to the judgment seat of the World. Even the emotional Burke should have been satisfied at last. Here was a passion that he could tear into innumerable tatters. And he did.

He published *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in November 1790. It was his estimate of the acts of the first twelve months of the great upheaval, which may be dated from the storming of the Bastille, July 14, 1789. It was a matured estimate, for he had written and rewritten it continually during the whole year. The theme—or rather the indictment—was continued until his death; and during that period Burke was not much less than a monomaniac. It was all to his credit that he took it so seriously, for until Burke wrote not many had realized its importance. The great Pitt scarcely seemed to regard it as practical politics. He thought it so insignificant that he began to plan a war in the East against Russia. Those Englishmen who were watching events were mostly generous enough to hope that the French would succeed in ridding themselves of a hopelessly indolent and inefficient government; and they had a less conscious hope that perhaps the example might help in ridding England of some of its ruling corruption and stupidity also.

But before anyone could quite determine what would happen, or what should be done, Burke began to rush wildly about shouting " Fire! fire!" at the top of his voice. He refused to support Fox's Bill to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, seeming to imagine that this was the first step toward the fall of the Tower of London. The general opinion was that he was making himself absurd. But the publication of the *Reflections* changed the public mind to the extent that the propertied classes took panic. It was not only in England; throughout Europe Burke's book went like a torch of summons to the war against France. It is even a question whether, had it not been for this book, France might not have settled her troubles before Europe intervened. It was the threat of foreign invasion that gave the political adventurers of France their excuse for the Terror, and all that followed it. If Burke was the cause of the coalition against France, then he caused the Terror also.

Was Burke right or wrong in his conception of the French Revolution? It is fair to describe his attempt to crush it as the chief endeavour of his famous career. Did that attempt prove him to be a wise man or a foolish one, or merely one of those ordinary middling men who are half right and half wrong, who have (being only middling) certainly no title to great fame, whether for wisdom or folly? In a hundred smaller points of detail Burke was quite right concerning the affairs of France. On the final question, that summed all these up into a great whole, as the most sensational event in history, Burke was utterly and profoundly wrong. His arguments would have seemed conclusive in a police court. He could have easily secured convictions or committals against thousands of these revolutionaries—for assault, incitement to riot, murder, sacrilege, blasphemy, and most of the offences contained in the criminal code. Tested by the standards of the law-courts of Europe, Burke had a reasonable case for his amiable hope that the French Revolution would be hanged, drawn and quartered. No one must blame Burke for using heated language when he wrote on this subject; for no one should think that this earthquake of a great nation can be discussed and valued in the quiet language current between bishops and their butlers.

But, tested by the standards of philosophy and measured by the rods of universal history, Burke's criticism of the Revolution was little but the ravings of a sick man in delirium. His argument had the intellectual content of a street brawl. His treatment of the great event showed that he never saw it as a whole, and further, had he seen that whole, it is clear that his historical knowledge was too slight in texture to give his criticism any value. Sentence after sentence in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* and also in his later writings, can be isolated as gems of wisdom in detail; but all gathered together it is evident that here if ever was a case of a man who could not see the wood because of the trees. When he said in 1790 that if the Revolution continued as it had begun it would soon be in the hands of a scum of self-seeking adventurers, he was not so far from the truth. His words are one of the great prophecies of history: "If this monster of a Constitution can continue, France will be wholly governed by the agitators in corporations, by societies in the towns formed of directors of assignats, and trustees for the sale of Church lands, attorneys, agents, money-jobbers, speculators and adventurers, composing an ignoble oligarchy, founded on the destruction of the Crown, the Church, the nobility and the people. Here end all the deceitful dreams and visions of the equality and rights of men. In the 'Serbonian bog' of this base oligarchy they are all absorbed, sunk and lost for ever." The prophecy became a fact.

It is useless denying that the greater part of the men and women who led the French Revolution—as in the case of most revolutions—were distinctly objectionable people with whom one would not have cared to share one's dinner table. Some of them were more or less mad, some were dishonest self-seekers, some thoroughly vicious, and the rest of them were entirely sincere or still more entirely stupid. Of course Burke was right when he maintained that it is impossible to proceed by way of violent change. As he wrote to Elliot in 1795: "I wished to warn the people against the greatest of all evils—a blind and furious spirit of innovation under the name of reform"; but when he added as the next sentence, "I was indeed well aware that power rarely reforms itself," he clearly did not see whither this latter remark would lead him; for it cut the ground from under so much of his criticism of the revolutionaries. It is indeed impossible to reform a nation by standing it on its head, as those sincerely stupid people tried to do in France. Burke made legitimate fun of that vain hope that it would save France if it were cut up into artificial departments with new communes and new cantons—"this new pavement of square within square, and this organization, and semi-organization, made on the system of Empedocles and Buffon, and not upon any politic principle." This critic was right when he protested that society is a living organization and cannot be played with at the reformer's will. We realize now better than in Burke's time that the units of the body social cannot be shuffled and dealt around as a card-player deals his pack ; and all honour to Burke for grasping that vital fact so soon.

Again, Burke had a sound argument in his mind when he asked whether a community of " lazy " monks was the worst thing that could happen to society, even if they only sang all day in their choir. For, said he, " they are as usefully employed as if they worked from dawn to dark in the innumerable servile, degrading, unseemly, unmanly, and often most unwholesome and pestiferous occupations, to which by the social economy so many poor wretches are inevitably doomed. If it were not so generally pernicious to disturb the natural course of things . . . I should be infinitely more inclined forcibly to rescue them from their miserable industry, than violently to disturb the tranquil repose of monastic quietude." Of course, Burke had too deep a respect for property to write thus of labour in real seriousness ; and his desire to save the French Church was based on his conviction that if the Church and religion broke down, then his beloved property would be submerged in the deluge that would flow through the breach in the social ramparts. Still, as a point against the blind stupidity of the French revolutionists it was a neat debating score.

So, in one small point after another, and, as we have seen, even in important matters, Burke had good grounds for his case against the Revolution. But when his arguments are set out in their proper proportion against the background of the whole social and political condition of France, then his case becomes little more than the size of the fly on the wheel. He was held by his contemporaries, and is still considered in the history-books, as a man with a philosophical, a political and historical mind. He clearly himself believed that he had all these qualities. It is the more astounding, therefore, to find him as hopelessly dazed by this great convulsion in France as a country cousin is confused by the number of platforms at Waterloo Station. He so completely lost his head that he mistook the opinions and acts of a few dozen men and women in Paris for the thoughts and deeds of the French nation. " The Revolutionary harpies of France," he shrieked, "sprung from night and hell, or from that chaotic anarchy which generates equivocally 'all monstrous, all prodigious things,' cuckoo-like, adulterously lay their eggs . . . leave nothing unrent, unrifled, unravaged, or unpolluted with the slime of their filthy offal." This panic-stricken Irishman, who was reputed, and believed himself, to be a philosopher, turned out to be so dull-witted and badly informed that he mistook a clique of adventurers and army contractors for the French race.

Burke never realized that the French were the most cultured people in Europe. He had himself been received as an honoured guest in the salons of Paris, but it is clear that this visitor from duller London, bred as he had been in a Quaker school, was altogether ill at ease in a society that recklessly and charmingly dared to discuss whatever subject came within its view. The sight and sound of a governing class with brilliant wit and fine manners rasped on his prim soul, and he went back to England to declare: "I see some of the props of good government already begin to fail." The whole incident goes to prove that France then, as now, stood at the highest point of world culture. Was Burke, then, such a hopeless ignoramus that he could measure this nation by the deeds of a few cut-throats and fanatics in Paris? Frankly, Burke was of such a nervously emotional nature that he was capable of even that. Take the case of his passing glance at Marie-Antoinette when he went to Versailles during his visit of 1773. It is possible that he might have altogether changed his opinion of the French Revolution had it not been for the memory of that lady's face. It would be unkind to quote once more that famous paragraph in the *Reflections* where he recalls his emotions at that sight. This mature statesman and writer has the calm assurance to tell his readers that the history of France should be decided by the appeal of that pretty face. "I thought ten thousand swords must have leapt from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone."

That is Burke all over. When he should have been discussing the social conditions of France, he was dreaming of a pretty woman, "glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy. Oh, what a revolution! and what a heart must I have to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall!" Remember, he was deadly in earnest, for it happened that this passage formed part of some proof-sheets that he sent to Sir Philip Francis for his approval; and Burke was indignant when his friend promptly replied that all this about the French Queen was "pure foppery." Burke's answer was that he wept when he wrote the passage, and wept again when he reread it. It is true that there may be few things so worth weeping for as a pretty face; but one must really distinguish between melodrama and sociology. Had this lady been the most virtuous, the most beautiful and the wisest in France, she would have weighed not a grain in a philosopher's estimate of the national problem. As a matter of fact, Marie-Antoinette was very far from any of these qualities, and if anything could excuse the crimes of the revolutionists it was her folly and treachery. She was almost the weakest spot in the Royalists' case—and Burke thought she was one of its strongest points of defence.

Burke's ignorance of the facts in this matter of the Queen is only one instance of his ignorance of the French position altogether. Lord Morley writes tersely: "The fact is that Burke did not know enough of the subject about which he was writing." We might forgive his ignorance of facts, but for a man who professed to be a bundle of tender sympathies it is impossible to overlook his want of imagination when he was faced by the agony of France. He had not enough historical knowledge to know how France had been driven desperate by the crushing of its local liberties under the crude centralization of Richelieu and his successors, and by the reckless extravagance of the Court of the Bourbon Kings. Had they been a poor-spirited race—like the Germans, for example—the French would have borne with tyranny meekly. But they rose in anger at last, not because they were the most downtrodden, but just because they were one of the freest people in Europe. A few bad harvests brought the crisis, and the criminal folly of the French Court and its Ministers did the rest. Irresistibly France was swept away by a wave of bold self-assertion. If Burke had been a man of wide culture, instead of little more than a politician's hack-writer, he would have understood the courage and righteousness of that national assertion. At its heart France was sound. But it is a dangerous thing to play with the laws of society, just as Browning has said it is "a dangerous thing to play with souls." It quite naturally happened, therefore, that unhappy France, setting out to reform itself, found suddenly that events had got beyond control. Someone had blundered, or somebody was self-seeking. Anyhow, sane possible reforms became insane or impossible anarchy, and the most brutal became more powerful than the wise.

There was France writhing in the agony of child-bed; she was about to give birth to a new epoch. Never had conception been more legitimate, for the democracy of the most democratic race in Europe and the sensibilities of the most refined one had been grossly insulted by a callously stupid government. It was indeed time that France asserted itself. But the task proved beyond its powers for the moment, and the torture of this great people was piteous. At such a moment a statesman would have offered constructive advice; a philosopher would have shown broad toleration; and a man of feeling would have rushed with sympathy. Burke professed to be all these. Yet at this supreme crisis in history he can think of nothing more helpful than to stand outside the sick-room, raving in a manner more like the lady next door in hysterics than a philosopher. He tried to incite the world to rush in and slaughter the patient. The mere rumour, in later days, that Pitt was thinking of making peace with the Republic sent Burke into convulsions. One *Letter on a Regicide Peace* followed another; and they ceased only because Burke died. He left the world with bitter sorrow that the people of France had not been dragged through the mud by the Kings of Europe, because here was a nation that had vainly attempted to save itself from the gross misgovernment of an utterly incompetent Court and its bureaucrats.

Even on his own lines Burke could have stated such a clear case against the revolutionary government. The men in possession of power were, many of them, self-seeking adventurers—history is one continual proof that it generally has been so—but there were as many wise and honourable men in France as anywhere in the world. Burke was one of the last men who should have needed a hint on this matter, for had he not written, "In truth, the tribe of vulgar politicians are the lowest of our species"? These tyrants (if such they were) in Paris were exercising their tyranny over their own people. Indeed, Burke seemed to admit it when he wrote: "The world knows that in France there is no public, that the country is composed but of two descriptions—audacious tyrants and trembling slaves." To call this people servile is a ridiculous perversion of the truth, but, accepting his statement, could he have more clearly shown how worthy this helpless nation was of sympathy? If he had possessed the slightest knowledge of current affairs he would have known that it was the threat of the Kings and the *émigrés* (Burke's dear friends and masters) that turned the young revolutionary Republic into an aggressive force. France decided to conquer Europe because she realized that Europe intended to conquer her. Of course, there were all those adventurers in Paris who egged on the tumult of war, because times of chaos and war are most convenient for those who are out for plunder. Had it not been for the *émigrés* sheltering beyond the Rhine, and the Kings who made very clear their intention of making what territorial profit they could out of the troubles in France, then there would have been little chance for those political adventurers to turn a legitimate attempt to win freedom into a wild scramble for power. It was the policy of such as Burke that made the Terror possible. It was his favourite actress, Marie-Antoinette, who drove the people mad with the fear of her treachery and revenge. It was she who called the Kings of Europe to crush France by force of arms. It was her folly that set up the guillotine; and if ever justice demanded a head, it was fitting that hers should fall.

Burke had lost control of his intellect. France, to him, meant a few score intriguers in Paris; he could not see the nation behind them—or, shall we say, under them. That was only one side of his monumental blunder. Had he called on Europe to crush a nation because it gave submission to tyrants, it would have been stupid, it would have been heartlessly severe. Nevertheless, there would have been some rude sense of justice in it. But Burke had another object in view, and it was the full measure of this man. He began his wrath against the people of France when there was scarce a murmur of desire on their part to overthrow the monarchy, still less any suggestion of personal punishment. There had certainly been in limited parts of France the burning of châteaux; there had been many bread riots; and the Bastille had been rushed by a mob that had many suspicious symptoms of being organized by those adventurers who were already seeking their opportunity. But we must assume that Burke was well informed in public affairs; he surely had never mistaken the Gordon Riots for the voice of England? Did he imagine that France, or any other country, was, in those wilder days, to reform herself without temporary confusion? The question may make us realize the fundamental conviction of Burke's character. He was so satisfied with the social order as it already was that he could not conceive of any radical change being necessary.

That is the political and economic mind of Edmund Burke. He stood for the established order. He was the most powerful and most subtle of the defenders of the men in possession. He was the advocate of the Ruling Class: the chief protector of their property. Thus it was that immediately the French Revolution began Burke was its opponent: because it dared to ask for change, and began to take for itself what had been refused to its petition. Burke was the most convinced Tory in English history. There are a few sentences scattered here and there through his writings that seem to scent of liberality of thought and welcoming of reform. But when analysed they all come to very little on paper; and when it came to practice, Burke's own official and political career is a proof that they meant even less. Whatever reform Burke was prepared to sanction, it must not interfere with the supreme power of the propertied and governing class. This man, who has strangely become known in the schoolbooks as a Liberal (in the sense of generous thought), will be found on inspection to have performed much the same function for the rich that a stone castle did for the Norman barons. It saved their existence. It does not appear that he concealed this fact either from himself or from the world. When he first wrote on the Revolution it was chiefly in the orthodox political phrases—the rights of kings and senates, the franchise and the constitution in general. But he soon realized what was really at stake. In his letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, in 1792, he wrote of "the great danger of our time, that of setting up number against property." Again: "It is one of the excellences of our Constitution that all our rights of provincial election regard rather property than person." But it was in his letter of defence against the attacks of the Duke of Bedford (on the matter of Burke's pension) that he showed so frankly his hand. He admitted there that he knew perfectly well the essential effect of his arguments against the revolutionists in France. For he told the Duke that "there is one merit of mine which he, of all men living, ought to be the last to call in question. I have supported with very great zeal . . . those opinions which buoy up the ponderous mass of his nobility, wealth and titles. . . . I have done all I could to discountenance their inquiries into the fortunes of those who hold large portions of wealth without any apparent merit of their own." Could anything be franker? But evasion was impossible; for Burke had been driven by the tumult of France to show his hand when perhaps quieter times would have permitted him to play his cards in the craftier manner of the ordinary politician.

At all costs Burke was intent on saving the Rich and the Governing Classes from attack; and if he had not been such an innocent child he would not have been so stupid as to give himself away for the sake of scoring a few clever points off the Duke of Bedford. This letter is a very good example of Burke's weakness and strength. It shows the qualities that made this third-rate man one of the celebrities of Europe. It is a brilliant letter. It certainly caused great fun at all the smart breakfast tables. The Duke had suggested that Burke had no right to a State pension in his old age; and the answer was as neat an example of the "look at your own dirty face" argument as a philosopher could be expected to produce. Indeed, it is quite delicious. He contrasts his own services to the State—which had certainly been prodigious in amount if not so monumental in quality—with the services of the Duke. Then he gives a short sketch of the manner in which that peer's family came into power, built on the spoils of the Church at the Reformation: "The grants to the House of Russell were so enormous as not only to outrage economy, but even to stagger credibility. The Duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the Crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk; he plays and frolics in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst 'he lies floating many a rood,' he is still a creature. His ribs, his fins, his whalebone, his blubber, the very spiracles through which he spouts a torrent of brine against his origin, and covers me all over with the spray—everything of him and about him is from the throne. Is it for *him* to question the dispensation of the royal favour?" One can see in a flash this gigantic creature tumbling clumsily in a prehistoric marsh. It is a classic of vituperation.

But observe the extreme danger of the whole argument. The more conclusively Burke proved that Bedford did not deserve his possessions, the more preposterous was the plea that Burke had done his best to save this national plunderer from the avenging revolutionists who were then rising with intent of rough and ready justice. It was only a frank contempt for public sense that could have allowed the writer to set up such a perilous defence, which could be so easily outflanked; and one scarcely knows whether to admire more the insolence of the bluff or the dainty skill with which it is carried through. "My merits, whatever they are, are original and personal; his are derivative. It is his ancestor, the original pensioner, that has laid up this inexhaustible fund of merit, which makes His Grace so very delicate and exceptious about the merit of all other grantees of the Crown. Had he permitted me to remain in quiet, I should have said, 'Tis his estate; that's enough. It is his by law; what have I to do with it or its history? He would naturally have said on his side, 'Tis this man's fortune. He is as good now as my ancestor was two hundred and fifty years ago. I am a young man with very old pensions; he is an old man with very young pensions—that's all."

It is all very excellent—on the lines of Mr. Lloyd George squabbling (in the old days!) with the peers about their Church lands. But does it help to settle whether either Burke or Bedford had much claim to his pension? There is the suggestion, indeed, that if only the Duke had held his tongue, then Burke would have held his pen; for did not the angry politician add: "In the name of common sense, why should the Duke of Bedford think that none but the House of Russell are entitled to the favour of the Crown?" Which is very true, but it is an answer which would naturally receive more attention in Billingsgate than in more scholastic circles. It was, nevertheless, just the smart answer which made Burke's pen so useful to the political magnates in whose service he spent most of his life. He devoted his earlier public years to playing the part of general secretary and friendly adviser to the Whigs. He told them what to think; and then he put it into good English for them, in case they got muddled in their grammar and logic. There is really no knowing what might have happened to the bewildered Whig noblemen and country gentlemen in those days if it had not been for Burke's fatherly care. They might have forgotten all about the Revolution of 1688, with its magnificent principles on which the whole safety of the nobility and plutocracy depended. Without Burke to keep them straight in the path of self-interest, they might have become reactionary and gone back to the healthier traditions of national life, when the welfare of the State was held more sacred than the interests of party. Who knows?

The value of Burke to them was that he did possess brains of a sort. However one may disagree with his principles and distrust his sincerity, the fact remains that it was not safe to get within reach of his tongue or his pen unless one was equally heavily armed or at least regardless of one's reputation. The governing persons of that day, very much like their successors now, were by no means a well-educated class as the school board inspectors understand the term. Prime Ministers are reported, on good authority, to have been in the habit of giving instructions for the seizure of new colonies before they were quite sure where they were on the map. Plenty of them were very brilliant men at dinner-parties, and even in the Houses of Parliament, if they had but the delicate balance between enough wine and not too much of it. But few of them had the plodding patience to acquire the sort of solid knowledge which Burke placed at their disposal. He was the sort of fellow who could read a dozen pages of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* without having to interrupt his study in order to shoot a partridge or hunt a fox. He could write long paragraphs about finance, without having to inquire, like Lord Randolph Churchill, what "the damned dots" meant. He could discuss questions of trade and industry. He could spin quite long sentences on all manner of subjects without making himself look foolish, and generally with the effect of making his opponents appear entirely ridiculous.

Beyond his power of detailed knowledge, Burke had a still more useful quality in public life. He could write or speak a sentence of bounteous gracefulness that made everybody feel that it was noble and right and beyond further argument. At his best he was a real poet and artist in words; even at his worst he was a first-class melodramatist. Of the former rank, there is above all that passage in his reply to the Duke of Bedford where he writes of the death of his only son. "The storm has gone over me; and I lie like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honours, I am torn up by the roots, and lie prostrate on the earth. . . . I am alone. I have none to meet my enemy at the gate. Indeed, my lord, I greatly deceive myself if in this hard season I would give a peck of refuse wheat for all that is called fame and honour in the world. . . . I live in an inverted order. They who ought to have succeeded me are gone before me. They who should have been to me as posterity are in the place of ancestors." And in the next paragraph there is an example of his pungency when he goes on: "The Crown has considered me after long service; the Crown has paid the Duke of Bedford in advance. He has had a long credit for any service which he may perform hereafter."

It was this extraordinary blending of stately prose with something much more like pig-sticking that made Burke so conspicuous. He could turn a phrase with the same sort of skill that the experienced craftsman can turn a table-leg. The subject of colonial policy in America brought forth many of the best examples of his art: "The question with me is, not whether you have a right to render your people miserable; but whether it is not your interest to make them happy. It is not what a lawyer tells me I *may* do, but what humanity, reason and justice tell me I ought to do." Then he had a ripe sense of irony: "The temper and character which prevail in our colonies are, I am afraid, unalterable by any human art. We cannot, I fear, falsify the pedigree of this fierce people, and persuade them that they are not sprung from a nation in whose veins the blood of freedom circulates. The language in which they would hear you tell them this tale would detect the imposition; your speech would betray you. An Englishman is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into slavery." While the sentence turning on John Hampden and his twenty-shilling shipmoney tax is too hackneyed to quote.

But perhaps Burke's most fruitful gift from his fairy godmother was the capacity to see everything through the coloured glass of sentiment. Burke had a good intellectual foundation of quite solid reason. But the slightest whiff of sentiment, and that intellect was shaken to its roots, and the man of reason became the sport of the most childish emotions. We have seen that the memory of Marie-Antoinette's face was enough to overturn any historical facts that were in his mind. It is undignified to watch this mature statesman writing of the French Revolution as though it were a thing of fiction, in the telling of which he need not keep to the evidence. For his conception of the virtuous monarchy of France was scarcely anything but fiction. Poor Louis Seize was not far from a simpleton (although an honourable and entirely well-meaning one); Louis XV, before him, had been an idle rake; and Louis XIV had tried to make democratic Frenchmen believe that their autocratic King was God's deputy on earth. It certainly would have been much juster if he had been guillotined instead of Louis XVI, who had to bear all the pains of his ancestors' misdeeds. If any one person was responsible for the Revolution it was that proud, narrow-minded woman, Marie-Antoinette, who played the tyrant over her weak husband, as Madame Roland bullied hers. The Queen had courage, but stupid bravery has ruined more nations than it has saved. That Burke should have detected any virtues in this Queen of France worthy of modifying the national demand for reform rules him outside the company of rational men. If all the reformers were as bad as he painted them—and they almost were—that was no reason for dragging Marie-Antoinette into the discussion. A philosopher would have dismissed her as nothing but a nuisance, in the way of reasonable debate. She was a disagreeable fact, it is only too true, but that was no reason why Burke should turn her into a superstition. There is no denying the truth. Burke could at times be a sentimentalist, and sometimes of the most maudling kind. It is kindest to try to believe that his vein of snobbery was due to nothing else but his sentimentality, and not to a self-seeking desire for patronage. Burke does not seem to have been an intriguer for office and wealth; if he were so, he was a bad failure. He was utterly disgusted when he failed to get office in the Cabinet; but he certainly does not appear to have taken the steps usual in political circles to get such an advancement. He was a snob because he sincerely believed in the great and rich and powerful. He was intellectually convinced that they were entitled to the respect and obedience of those below them.

A rather pitiable example of Burke's respect for rank is the letter which he wrote to Catherine of Russia in 1791, encouraging her to assist the French *émigrés*. It would be hard to put together in so small a space so much ignorance of history, perversion of present facts, and servility, as Burke has got into this short note. "The debt which your Imperial Majesty's august predecessors have contracted to the ancient manners of Europe, by means of which they civilized a vast empire," has its humorous side when one remembers the number of heads Peter the Great had to strike off before he could bully Russia into accepting Western civilization of the type of Louis XIV and its centralized autocracy. He congratulates the Empress that "your sagacity has made you perceive that in the case of the Sovereign of France the cause of all sovereigns is tried; that in the case of its Church the cause of all Churches; and that in the case of its nobility is tried the cause of all the respectable orders of all society and even of society itself."

In that one sentence one can see all Burke's innate contempt for the lower orders as part of the governing machinery of a State. That one should believe that only an aristocracy of brains should govern is an arguable conception, even if wrong; and the purest lovers of popular freedom sometimes have made out a good case for a hereditary ruling caste. But in Burke's case it went much further than that. Again and again hasty contempt for the poor and lowly thrusts itself into his writings. For example, when he discusses the new French Assembly, he sizzles with indignation that humble country priests should go to Paris and sit beside noble-born bishops in the States-General of their land. What, he asks, do little traders know of governing? Had he really been the impartial scientific statesman he professed to be, he would have asked if they could possibly know less than the muddle-headed rulers of France who had so obviously and utterly broken down in their attempts to govern. He is horrified by the thought of more humane life in the army: "The soldier is told he is a citizen, and has the rights of man and citizen." Burke obviously could not conceive of anyone obeying orders unless he was coerced. If ever there were a narrow class philosopher it was Burke.

His flowing talk of liberty in his earlier days probably only convinced himself and the other sentimentalists. But he never meant his talk to be taken too seriously. The idea was to be strictly construed with the terms of the legal documents which were drafted by the Whig victors who won when William of Orange was accepted as King. It is strange that Burke, who professed such admiration for the constitutional settlement of 1688, should have got into such a condition of nerves when the French proposed to define their constitutional rights also. But a liberty which was based on sentiment was naturally only a thing for this philosopher's theoretical hours. "Grand, swelling sentiments of liberty I am sure I do not despise. They warm the heart ; they enlarge and liberate our minds ; they animate our courage in a time of conflict. . . . Every politician ought to sacrifice to the graces, and to join compliance to reason." The whole paragraph is charmingly self-revealing. Burke classes all this talk of liberty with liqueurs and tonics. It was a mere adornment to political life in its frivolous moments. Burke only praised liberty on paper ; at the first appearance of it in practical life he fled like a terrified school-child. He was like those men who call for war to the death —from the safe spots a hundred miles behind the front line —and are very indignant when asked to get a little nearer the danger zone of active affairs.

Burke was quite pleased with that somewhat stately aspect of human society which is called, a little vaguely, political liberty. It looked very well when drafted in dignified English and inserted in Petitions of Right and such documents. It made a basis for most moving speeches in Parliament. But its greatest advantage was that it was fairly easily evaded in practice. It was a splendid thing to talk about, and it did not much disturb everyday life. It was, in fact, the politicians' ideal. They had got it from the philosophers, who really meant it seriously ; but it was the politicians' business to see that such admirable theories did not become habits. Burke did this work more successfully than most men who have gone into political life. His evasive touch was more subtle, which may have been because he was to a large extent unconscious of what he was doing. Half his life Burke was a dreamer filled with his emotions. At least, that is the kindest way of judging him.

It is a little difficult to know how he ever got a reputation for being particularly attached to the principles of popular freedom, when all the time he was so obviously a sound defender of all the principles of privilege. Perhaps it was his treatment of the question of the American Colonies that gained him this halo of liberalism. But when analysed, it was one of his most energetic defences of the desires of the rich, although he seems to have spoken and acted in all innocent sincerity. For hard logic and artistic skill combined it would be hard to beat his speeches on the Colonies. He had not many men against him who were capable of defending themselves with much intellect; but Burke left their weak case in ruins. But if we want to know why he put so much energy into it, and what was the key to all his arguments, it will be found (one cannot help thinking) not in his classic sentences on Hampden and the glories of English freedom, but rather in a quiet statement of fact that appears in his speech of April 1774. "Lord Rockingham very early in that summer (1765) received a strong representation from many weighty English merchants and manufacturers, from governors of provinces and commanders of men-of-war, against almost the whole of the American commercial regulations, and particularly with regard to the total ruin which was threatened to the Spanish trade."

That was the real heart of the Opposition's fight for American liberty. The oppression of the colonists was ruining English trade. It was very clever of Burke to talk about Hampden and the glorious Constitution. That was what he was there to do; the nobles and gentlemen who governed the British Empire had not the education which led them to think of such neat arguments, whereas it was the literary gentleman's profession. And very admirably he did his work; indeed, he had an excellent case, of which the purest-souled philosopher need not have been ashamed. We lost America by childish blundering that even politicians have scarcely ever surpassed. There was nothing heroic about the colonists; there was more of sordid economy than of love of liberty in their attitude: they wanted England to defend their interests without themselves having to pay the cost—at least that was a substantial part of the quarrel. Anybody but a Grenville and his friends could have made an amicable settlement; but if we will be governed by stupid persons we must lose all kinds of national advantages, as well as America. If even the City merchants were anxious to come to terms with the Americans then there was no need to fight—for the City has almost always been the only element that desires to fight anybody.

The case against a war with America was that it would seriously damage our trade. As Burke said in his speech: "The whole trading interest of this Empire crammed into your lobbies, with a trembling and anxious expectation, waiting, almost to a winter's return of light, their fate from your resolutions. When at length you had determined in their favour [by repealing the Stamp Act] . . . there arose an involuntary burst of gratitude and transport." Burke, when he stood for American freedom, was thus, on his own showing, acting on the advice (shall we say, the instructions?) of the merchants of England. It was a group of Imperialists and theorists who pushed their country into this calamitous war: the kind of people who to-day would bring the Empire to ruin for the sake of an "all red" map.

Burke was quite candid about his position. As we have just seen, he revealed the old story of that deputation to Lord Rockingham, and in another sentence repudiated any theoretical views. "I am not here going into the distinctions of rights, not attempting to mark their boundaries. I do not enter into these metaphysical distinctions; I hate the very sound of them. Leave the Americans as they anciently stood, and these distinctions, born of an unhappy contest, will die along with it." One is inclined to believe that this passage reveals more of Burke's mind than many remarks which have received more attention. He has so persistently been discussed as a man who dealt in high theories and great principles, as a delighter in the abstract. Nothing could be further from the truth. Burke was at heart a materialist, like most sentimentalists. He was so vague in his principles that he was glad to cling to any material facts that came within his reach as he was being swept down the river of his emotions. Whatever his reasons, Burke was more matter-of-fact a politician than most of those who have got the credit of lofty thinking.

The Bristol electors knew their man when they chose him to represent that great centre of eighteenth-century trade. They quarrelled with him because he knew so much more about trading affairs than they did themselves that he wanted to increase Bristol's prosperity by promoting freer trade with Ireland. This obviously rational thing (for their own interests) was beyond the brain-power of the Bristol merchants. So Burke had to surrender his parliamentary seat for this commercial city. The matter of trade was always one of Burke's main interests. It was his grasp of finance and commerce that gave him such an easy superiority in the debates on the American Colonies. His first important political pamphlet, *Observations on the Present State of the Nation* (1769), was mainly about finance and trade. It was the heyday of youthful British Imperialism; and it would have been as hard for a man without imperialist views to attain a position in the House of Parliament of that time as it would be hard for a fish to live on dry land. Imperialism was the atmosphere of governing England at that moment. Burke, for all his lofty talk about principles, was probably more concerned about the prosperity of trade than most of his contemporaries of the ruling set. Being a good deal of a snob, he had much to say about the "nobility and gentry," but he seems to have realized that manufacture and commerce were rising to the first place, though there are many indications that he did not relish the change.

Although he might talk and write in terms of general principles, yet in reality Burke mainly thought in terms of something much more tangible. The American War was to him objectionable because it was ruining trade. When he saw it at the first glance, he was quite ready to discuss the French Revolution as it concerned the beautiful and romantic Marie-Antoinette; but that was only in the first flush of his emotion. Later on, when he had time to think it over more calmly, he wrote in the fourth *Letter on a Regicide Peace*, in 1797: " The present war is above all others (of which we have heard or read) a war against landed property." This materialist philosopher could imagine nothing more terrible happening to an individual or to a class than the loss of his wealth, for he largely judged men by the measure of their riches. When it fitted into his argument, he could be as coldly and critically matter-of-fact as any bank manager, and could define his terms so that they were reduced to the simplest elements. Thus, when he had to prove that England was as prosperous as France, he showed that this was mainly a question of where living was the cheaper; but even that simplification is not clear enough for Burke's mind, and he continues the argument: " It will be hard to prove that a French artificer is better fed, clothed, lodged, and warmed than one in England, for that is the sense, and the only sense, of living cheaper." That is a preciseness of language highly commendable in a writer of economics, and, if Burke had kept at that level, he would —not have been Burke.

For no sooner does one feel convinced by innumerable proofs from his writings and his life that Burke was a cool-headed thinker, than one is faced with equally convincing evidence proving the contrary, it would seem. For instance, when he wants to prove that the English Constitution does not admit of any tampering with the dynasty, he wrote: " The succession of the Crown has always been what it now is—an hereditary succession by law: in the old line it was a succession by the common law; in the new, by the statute law." Now, that would be quite a good statement if it were not that there are so many leading cases on this subject in English history to prove Burke utterly wrong; there were Canute, William the Conqueror, Henry IV, Edward IV, Henry VII, and, lastly, one which Burke at least might have remembered when he wrote, the case of William III. His whole argument on this point was that of a third-rate counsel with a bad case : he tried to bluff the bench and the jury into believing that Englishmen had never broken the rule of hereditary succession to the Crown.

A still more astounding case of misjudgment of facts that should have been perfectly clear to Burke is when he writes of the condition of European civilization at the outbreak of the revolutionary epoch : " In the long series of ages which have furnished the matter of history, never was so beautiful and august a spectacle presented to the moral eye as Europe afforded the day before the Revolution in France." A man whose " moral eye " could be soothed by the cynicism and international outrages of Frederick the Great and Catherine of Russia, who could apply adjectives like " beautiful " and " august " to the reckless selfishness of a Louis XV, can scarcely come under the description of a precise thinker. With such a system immediately behind him, Burke goes on " to warn the people against the greatest of all evils, a blind and furious spirit of innovation under the name of religion." He was entitled to say, and indeed he was right in saying, that blind innovation was a folly and worse than a folly, but no sane man could have said that reform of such a system was " the greatest of all evils." Such a sentence could only put everything out of perspective. He was still more preposterous when he continued, offering the example of the British Constitution to the French as a way out of their anarchy. He wrote that the House of Commons, " without shutting its doors to any merit in any class, is, by the sure operation of adequate causes, filled with everything illustrious in rank, in descent, in hereditary and acquired opulence, in cultivated talents, in military, civil, naval and political distinction." A man who could write such a sentence would be a splendid reporter for a fashionable wedding, and he would have many of the qualities which go to make an agreeable Bond Street hairdresser ; but as a judicial statement of the real merits of the English House of Commons it has insuperable defects.

With such violent contrasts of character before us when we consider Burke as a whole, it is very hard to believe that he was always quite straightforward. If he had sound brains (and so much of his work is so clever that it is hard to think otherwise), could he have made such astounding errors in fact without knowing what he was doing? With all his knowledge of the world and its history, did he really believe himself justified in persuading his readers that pre-revolutionary Europe was a triumph of morality, and that the British House of Commons contained the pick of the wisdom of his country? One is tempted to reply shortly that Burke must have been a deliberate humbug. And yet there was a good deal more of the child about him than the knave. In his earlier days he wrote: "I am not one of those who think that the people are never in the wrong. . . . But I do say that in all disputes between them and their rulers the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people." And if anyone handed him that sentence (and many did) in later days, when he had spent the rest of his life in denying its truth, he would not have seen the joke; he would have been unconscious of anything absurd in his logical behaviour or his consistence of thought.

Burke had one of those disorderly minds that may produce a reasonable thought or a wrong one. He had a large brain, but it never seems to have reduced its parts to obedience. It was never certain what would happen therein, and what would come thereout. Perhaps it was that he never grasped one or two fundamental truths about the universe, so that everything floated aimlessly around him. Or perhaps it was what one might call a want of moral conviction. He went through life as a homeless tramp. He started with the foundations of a fine intellect; but for some reason he took to loose intellectual living, and finished up as one who had become not very far from a degenerate. When he died he was living in a world of his own emotions, and they were only very remotely related to the facts of the world. He had become a kind of auto-cannibal—living on his own thoughts. He became entirely subjective, and spun his opinions not out of the experience of external things as they were really happening around him, but out of those internal imaginations which he began to mistake for the outer world. He built, at last, one or two fixed principles, with which this aimless wanderer tried to find a little peace in his old age; but they were principles which had so little to do with real life that they were poor anchorage for a human soul.

The great tragedy was the French Revolution. With an *idée fixe* that property and rank were the only certain factors of the social system, one can imagine Burke's horror at the events in France. A man who had dismissed most of the essentials of humanity and put them outside his conception of society—for this was what Burke had necessarily done when he made such as Marie-Antoinette the central figure of his social picture—inevitably could see nothing but anarchy in the great Revolution. In quite an unattached manner one has recently happened upon a character which seems very helpful in the analysis of Edmund Burke. Marie Bolshkaseva was one of the women who enlisted in the Battalion of Death in the Russian Army during the late war. She has written her reminiscences, in which appears the following passage: "I came across a couple hiding behind a trunk of a tree. One of the pair was a girl belonging to the Battalion and the other a soldier. They were making love! . . . I was almost out of my senses. My mind failed to grasp that such a thing could be really happening at the moment when we were trapped like rats at the enemy's mercy. My heart turned into a raging cauldron. In an instant I flung myself upon the couple. I ran my bayonet through the girl. The man took to his heels before I could strike him."

That was almost precisely Burke's mental condition when he discovered the French Revolution—though it was not hiding behind a tree. One can imagine this hysterical woman in cold blood killing the girl in an attempt to maintain discipline in a moment of peril. But that her heart should become a "raging cauldron" at the sight of a human passion which is even more primitive than the lust for war, is surely sufficient to put Marie Bolshkaseva out of sane society. And in just the same way Burke became a cauldron when he was faced by the great elementary passions of the French Revolution. Because Marie-Antoinette had an attractive manner and Robespierre and Marat were unbalanced fanatics—like himself—and a few dozen others were scoundrels, he forgot that ninety-nine out of every hundred French men and women were normal human beings, who were living under conditions when every human instinct was exaggerated to the highest degree. Burke could only run his bayonet through a healthy nation that had lost its presence of mind in a moment of excitement. Like Marie Bolshkaseva, he had lost his sense of proportion in human affairs, and could only meet panic by hysteria. Spurred on by Burke's own cries of alarm, the Kings of Europe advanced to attack France, which was in imminent danger; and when the people of France, in the terror of self-defence, became primitive in their passions, Burke lost his intellectual balance and could not distinguish the permanent from the trivial.

Burke was a hopeless failure. He wrote as if he had the intention to reform the British Constitution, and he did nothing more than abolish a few superfluous offices round the Court. He tried to save the American Colonies from disruption from the Motherland, and the argument degenerated into an unsuccessful attempt to save the credit of a few London merchants who could not collect their colonial debts. He imagined that he had a gospel of liberty to preach to the British people; but it turned out that it was only a pompous sermon on the ideals of the political adventurers of 1688. He began with much talk of Freedom, and he ended by being the mouthpiece of every tyrannical instrument in Europe. He began with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and it appeared that his ideal was the figure of a narrow-minded Queen and the symbols of a narrow social caste. Burke began as a philosopher, and he finished as something not very far from a snob. He was honest and less self-seeking than is usual amongst ambitious men; but his life-work was wrecked because his intellect was always at the mercy of his emotions.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI, EARL OF BEACONSFIELD

(1804–1881)

It was perhaps inevitable that, sooner or later, England should be ruled by an alien, who was not even a European, but an Oriental of the race of the Jews. It was by no means inevitable—but merely our happy fate—that this foreign conqueror should also be a poet and a dreamer, a historian and a gentleman. As Sidney Smith said, "We owe much to the Jews"; and among our many debts is that they have given us one of the few charming modern statesmen. Disraeli is interesting quite beyond the scope of the scientific historical student; he is not such as the Pitts and the Foxes, and their kindred, whom we must endure (if we are sociologically minded) because they have intruded so obtrusively into English history. The Earl of Beaconsfield would have been charming if he had never appeared on a page of our national records; when he does appear thereon, he is as a fine jewel on the dust-heap of our political life.

It is almost an established rule of history that a race is rarely governed by one of its own blood. Certainly in this country the alien has been the rule and not the exception, if we consider the list of our monarchs. William the Conqueror and his sons were Norman dukes; the Plantagenets were French nobles; the Tudors were Welsh, if Tudor Vychan ap Gronw as an ancestor be admitted as evidence of race. The Stuarts were Normans who had become Scots; and when their national taste for continual theological discussion at last led to their final expulsion, they were succeeded by a Dutchman, who in turn gave way to the German dynasty from Hanover It is clear that kings, like the prophets, are without honour in their own country. But a people rarely has much choice in the selecting of its monarch. In the case of a prime minister it has generally been held that election is more democratic, and there has always been a persistent wish on the part of Englishmen that the ministers of their foreign kings should be home-bred. Our ancestors willingly elected a Dutchman or a Hanoverian for their king; they would on no account tolerate their foreign friends in the ministry.

As already said, Disraeli was by blood not even a European, but an Asiatic. He was an entire novelty in our higher governing circles, a new comet. He was already dazzling England when it was still unlawful for a Jew to sit in Parliament. It so happened that his father had paid more attention to pure literature than to pure dogma, so Benjamin his son had grown in a circle that was so callous of religious form that this pure Jew was baptized as a Christian in his early teens. Nevertheless, he was a Jew, notoriously, to all who could read as they ran. When Queen Victoria was asked to accept him as a Minister of State, it was much like asking a quiet housewife to take a Chinese cook or a Red Indian for a butler. The poor Queen was clearly embarrassed; she told Lord Derby that she only accepted this strange creature on his express guarantee that nothing untoward would occur. When Disraeli, as Leader of the House (which he became in 1852), fulfilled his official duty of writing to his Sovereign the nightly letter on the events of the sitting, his mistress was almost puzzled. She wrote to her uncle, the King of the Belgians, "Mr. Disraeli (*alias* Dizzy) writes very curious reports to me of the House of Commons' proceedings." It was as if she had received the washing list made out in Chinese. The curiosity grew to be one of her most trusted friends.

There were two Benjamin Disraelis, both charming and brilliant men, but clearly distinguishable from each other. At a first glance one would go no further than placing them in widely separate branches of the same family. There was the one who went into politics and made such a huge success in the House of Commons. All the while he was on the stage of the Commons Europe was holding its sides with laughter, and Sir Robert Peel wished that he (himself or Disraeli, or both) had never been born. This political member of the family was a ruthless opponent, and when he got his enemy by the neck dealt with him much as a terrier deals with rats. He was as clever a man at a party intrigue as could be found in Westminster society—so clever, indeed, that it was a long time before anyone would entrust their political honour to his keeping; but that was chiefly because they were afraid he would behave towards them as they would have done to him, if they had the skill. Half his life this Disraeli was regarded as something between a charlatan and a mountebank; and during the rest of his career he was the most trusted friend and servant of our primmest Queen, and all Europe was listening for his next words of wisdom.

Then there was the other man with the same name and the same face. This distantly related Disraeli was a dreamer, who kept himself to himself because he had the timid manners of all people who are of delicate tastes. It is said that it was difficult to make this Disraeli talk; which was not unnatural, for he lived in a far-away world of fancies which could scarcely be translated into words. He was a mystic, and regarded ordinary human beings as dull utilitarians who bored him when they did not disgust him. Unlike his political relation, who spent his whole life (almost without time to eat or sleep) at the Houses of Parliament, this poetical Disraeli was an idler and a flirt, who thought there was nothing in the world so delightful as a charming woman in her most bewitching mood. This mystical creature of imagination, when he would condescend to come to earth and treat of mortals, liked most of all to land in the romantic East, where things do not happen in the humdrum way of Paris and London.

So there are two Benjamin Disraelis: the politician who was the greatest success of London and Western Europe, and the poet who lived in the East, where the family was born. So there must obviously be two biographical notices, unless—which seems altogether improbable—it can be shown that the two men are the same. By a lengthy process of collating the two different sources of evidence (the details of which would unnecessarily trouble the reader), this difficult task has been accomplished ; and it has been proved for all practical purposes that the Disraeli who told the politicians (in his romances of *Coningsby* and *Sybil*) that they were a set of disreputable scoundrels was the same man who in a few years made them choose him as Prime Minister of Great Britain. And it is now beyond all reasonable doubt that the man who spent his early days in fashionable salons and yellow waistcoats was the same person who went into politics with the message to the gentlemen of England that unless they remembered their duty to the labouring poor of their country it would soon go very badly for their gentlemanly souls and estates.

At one moment a man of ultra fashion, and the next a social revolutionary with a passionate zeal that made the ordinary reformer seem an amateur or a faddist. Now the most worldly of cynics, the next the most worshipful and devout of believers—one feels that this is not a human mind, but much rather a psychological text-book. But the classification will look simpler when we have made that great division into the Disraeli who wrote in his study and lived in his thoughts, and the Disraeli who appeared on the political platform and lived that he might do well at Westminster. It would seem to have been by a very deliberate choice that he himself made this distinction in his life, although to the outside observer it seems an impossible choice that made a poet callously deliver his soul into the keeping of those who train politicians. But the accomplished fact faces us beyond all argument : Disraeli had the mind of a poet and he did become Prime Minister of Great Britain. We may find what explanation we please, but the thing itself is beyond discussion.

His wife—by no means the least of the mysteries of this mysterious man from the East—once wrote down the character of her husband, as they do in confession books. She expressed seventeen precise statements about him, of which the first was " Very calm," and the last was " His whole soul is devoted to politics and ambition," and in the middle of the list we read, "Often says what he does not think." It is a masterly little picture she gives us, somewhat in the manner of the latest impressionalists in paint, who pick out essentials and ignore the unimportant. The evidence may be prejudiced; but for what it is worth we should remember that the wife considered her husband "Very patient, very studious, very generous." Perhaps, a little further from the picture, we can, with these hints, see the whole even better than the wife could see it—for it is impossible to reveal all to one who lives in the same house; it would be as if we lived with the Recording Angel.

The main factors are fairly clear. Benjamin Disraeli found himself living in an alien country, where, rightly or wrongly, there was a deep prejudice against his race. Being a Jew, he also must have early discovered that he was more alert and brilliant than the great mass of his neighbours. It could not have been very long, indeed, before he saw that he was very much more alert and very much more brilliant than nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of the men and women he met. Is it surprising that this young man had great ambitions? It was one of those cases where the ambition was almost as great as the ability. But if this charming boy had not been ambitious for himself, his women friends would have intervened on his behalf. All through his life he preached (almost with the earnestness of a Nonconformist parson) the exhilarating and beneficial influence of women on a man's career. Many women intervened in his life—and, indeed, there was more than a good excuse for interesting oneself in young Disraeli, who did nothing that would damp this zeal. Sarcastic observers thought he dressed so beautifully to please these ladies, and he certainly seemed to have mistaken smoky London for Arcadia, if we judge by the rainbow colours of his garments. But he gave his lady friends more than a gorgeous cavalier. In his diary he wrote when he was sixteen: "Resolution—to be always sincere and open with Mrs. E. Never to say but what I mean—*point de moquerie*, in which she thinks I excel." If this unknown lady's ghost can still take satisfaction in its past, she will have known long ere this that she probably had more influence over this man's life than Bolingbroke and Sir Robert Peel, who by chance have more attracted the attention of the stately historians. Then there was the other woman who "said to me one day, and before I had shown any indication of my waywardness, 'You have too much genius for Frederick Place [the great solicitor's office in which he was apprenticed]: it will never do.' We were good friends. She married a Devonshire gentleman and was the mother of two general officers," was the boy's reminiscence when he was over seventy and an earl.

By the time he was twenty the frivolity of so much feminine society and so many flirtations had so steadied his career that Mr. John Murray could write in 1825: "He is a good scholar, hard student, a deep thinker, of great energy, equal perseverance, and indefatigable application, and a complete man of business. His knowledge of human nature and the practical tendency of mind and heart are as pure as when they were first formed . . . as playful as a child." It was not a bad result for a few years' dainty flirtations; his lady friends had put him on the road of one of the most original and most useful careers in English history—whereas he might have been driven by an unkind fate to a university and the society of tutors who were more fit to train bishops and members for the best London clubs. The garrison officers at Malta, which he visited in 1830, called Disraeli "that damned bumptious Jew boy"; but then most of them had been to the public schools and had a natural dread of imagination and a quick wit, and the still quicker tongue of a man who thus described himself in his Diary of 1833: "My mind is continental. It is a revolutionary mind. . . . Poetry is the safety-valve of my passions, but I wish to act what I write."

A man who was seeking a great career at the time when the Reform Bill of 1832 shook England was more likely than not to turn to politics, as a youth of Elizabeth's England turned to play-writing with Shakespeare or to seafaring with Drake, while the boys of the Tudors dreamed of Court offices and ecclesiastical lands, and Chatham's contemporaries set out to plunder India. But the Reform Bill set a new fashion in life adventures—the mode became political. Disraeli was clearly made for the part, if he could sink his better nature and decide to play the game. The men already in it had discovered the new adventurer; and one day Lord John Russell, no less, "fished as to whether I should support them. I answered, 'They had one claim upon my support; they needed it,' and no more." In 1832 he wrote: "I sat between Peel and Herries. . . . Peel was very gracious. . . . I reminded him by my dignified familiarity both that he was an ex-Minister and I a present Radical."

He called himself a Radical, but his friends must have been a little puzzled by his speeches. When he went down to his first election campaign he wrote: "I start on the high Radical interest, and take down strong recommendatory epistles from O'Connell, Hume, Burdett, and *hoc genus*. Toryism is worn out, and I cannot condescend to be a Whig." He was clearly uncertain himself what he was, as the party whips classify politicians. During his election he announced that he was independent of both parties; he added that he was sprung from the people, and it was only when he was chosen by the democracy that the Tories tried to claim him as their candidate. He soon undeceived both parties. "The nearest thing to a Tory in disgrace is a Whig in office," he slashed out with his right; and then came a blow with his left: "The Whigs have opposed me, not I them, and they shall repent it." They did, not at that election, but for the rest of his life. Within a few months he was fighting again, and here his creed was becoming clearer: "I shall withhold my support from every Ministry which will not originate some great measure to ameliorate the condition of the lower orders." He went on to attack that "incapable faction who, having knavishly obtained power by false pretences, sillily suppose that they will be permitted to retain it by half-measures. . . . Rid yourselves of all that political jargon and factious slang of Whig and Tory, two names with one meaning, used only to delude you. . . . I stand here without party. I plead the cause of the people, and I care not whose policy I arraign."

But we are now faced by the problem of all political careers : Can we believe one word that is said on a political platform ? If we are to believe Disraeli himself, we most certainly should be sceptical. He was already maintaining that the politicians were frauds and humbugs; and, like the Cretan who said that all Cretans were liars, he had shaken the value of his own testimony. It is here that the double nature of Disraeli's life becomes so useful to inquiring biographers : for he was already explaining his opinions elsewhere than on political platforms. He had already written the *Voyage of Captain Popanilla* in 1827, and, like almost all first books, it contains most of what its author had to say to the world—the rest was mainly a filling out of the details and more skilful craftsmanship. It has been already noted that Edmund Burke's first book contained a great deal of his life-history. In *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847) Disraeli has left us a frank political creed ; indeed, much more, for these three books contain a philosophy of life. Cast in the form of romance, there is little attempt to conceal that they are a gospel of moral and political reform for the English people. In the preface to the first of the three, Disraeli says that he has only used the method of fiction because it "offered the best chance of influencing opinion." The introduction to *Sybil* tells "the subject which these volumes aim to illustrate—the Condition of the People." In other words, quite apart from his public career as a politician, running side by side with it there is the recorded career of Disraeli as a philosopher and economist, as expressed in his long series of books.

It does not need much study of these books to see that they are by far the most important part of this statesman's gift to his country—it is no exaggeration to say that they are a gift to the thought of the world. They are not of merely temporary interest—like the interests of most matters that happen in parliamentary circles. They discuss ideas which lie beneath all parties and programmes, for they deal with the fundamentals of humanity. Indeed, they take particular care to impress on the reader that most of the antics of politicians are of the most trivial importance and entirely ignore the things that matter. Seeing that Disraeli himself went into politics and apparently behaved as most other politicians behave, it is a rare advantage to be able to check his parliamentary career by his written words. There can be little hesitation in putting most value, as evidence of what Disraeli really believed, on the books. There is, first, the obvious fact that public life at Westminster is one long series of compromises. It seems the unpleasant truth that a man does not accomplish in politics what he desires, but only what he can. The history of an honest man as an active statesman is not the record of his hopes, but of his disappointments. The Houses of Parliament are paved with the good intentions of a few honest men, and their failures are recorded in the Statute Books. There are dozens of passages in Disraeli's works which show how clearly he recognized that life is a continual compromise.

There is irresistible evidence all through these books that it was in them—not in Parliament—that he said what he believed. The sincerity is as clear as any evidence can be. For there was every reason why Disraeli should not have written such books at such a moment if he was only another political adventurer, as many said he was. Their publication was one of the most astoundingly brave things in English political history. Here was a Jew, consumed with a vast ambition to enter parliamentary life, who possessed the most limited influence except the resources of his own unlimited wits. We know from almost every page of his writings that he was conscious that political life was one long intrigue to win the help of those in possession, the privileged governing classes of blood and wealth. A selfish mean man would have done everything at such a moment in his career to help people to forget the fact that he was an alien by blood, a descendant of a hated religious faith, a lover of democracy and of liberty, and a despiser of vulgar intrigue.

What, on the contrary, did Disraeli do? He published to the world this trilogy of books, in the first of which he told the fine gentlemen who were ruling England that they were a set of pompous fools at the best and something much more evil at the worst; that they were surrounded by a crowd of petty intriguers for whom the polite dictionaries could supply no appropriate adjective. In the second, *Sybil,* he declared that the boasted wealth of England was held by a small class on the top and was wrung from the labour of a degraded poor: his text was that there were two nations, "The Rich and the Poor," and he preached his sermon without much regard for the feelings of the former. He said it was impossible to tell all the truth about the unutterable misery of the poor because "so little do we know of the state of our own country that the air of improbability which the whole truth would inevitably throw over these pages might deter some from their perusal." Then, in the third book, *Tancred,* the author told England that it owed the greater part of its faith and its civilization to the Jews, and declared, to a people and an age that worshipped materialism, that the spirit was more than matter, and that a great emotion was finer than a scientific formula.

If reckless courage be any test of sincerity, could anything be more conclusive than Disraeli's action at this turning-point in his political career? He flung down the glove to everything that seemed established in society. He challenged at one moment—for all his ideas can be discovered in each of the books, though in each the stress is thrown on one particular point—he challenged at once Rank, Wealth, Prejudice, just at the moment when he was attempting to persuade all those supreme powers to make him a member of their governing clique. He certainly showed respect to two institutions, the Crown and the People; but they were the weakest forces in the society of that day. And adventurers do not generally appeal to the weakest. This was clearly his faith and not his selfish policy. If we seek the real Disraeli we must go first to his books, and only in the second place to his political meetings.

What he said and did in Parliament will be discovered of small importance compared with the philosophy and imagination of his books.

If one can judge of intentions by their effects, the main object of *Coningsby* was to make the governing classes ridiculous. Being a man of wit and imagination himself, Disraeli would appear to have considered that by brilliant analysis and rapier-like passes he could deal a blow to the corrupt mass of the governing body. Being an alien, he did not realize, perhaps, what a stolid thing is the British mind ; and at the beginning of his political career he had scarcely measured the unweighable mass of the men in possession. One can no more demolish the governing class by wit and wisdom than one can clean mud off a cart by the breath of one's mouth. If it had been possible, there would not have been any rulers left after Disraeli had dealt with them ; for he annihilated them—they only survived by the monotony of habit.

Coningsby opens with the London clubs in a turmoil of excitement over the Reform Bill of 1832. A frantic attempt was being made to keep up the farce that the politicians and the wirepullers had the welfare of the nation at heart, whereas they were mainly concerned about the winning of the next vacant office or parliamentary seat. The Mr. Tapers and the Mr. Tadpoles and the worse Mr. Rigbys, who live on the corpse of Westminster as lice live on their parent—Disraeli has made them classic figures in literature, though it would have been better if he had succeeded in making them obsolete in real life. They were the toadies who sat round the dinner tables of wealthy political peers and haunted the boudoirs of Lady St. Julians and Lady X, Y, or Z, who took up politics instead of cards or the fine arts. Those were the good old days, " when there were only ten men in the House of Commons who were not either members of Brooks's or this place." They were the days when " the twelve-hundred-a-yearers " were the men who took politics seriously : " These numerous statesmen who believe the country must be saved if they receive twelve hundred a year. It is a peculiar class, that ;

£1,200 per annum, paid quarterly, is their idea of political science and human nature. To receive £1,200 per annum is government; to wish to receive £1,200 per annum is ambition." Their ideal of life was drawing a large salary without surrendering the privileges of their class and their patrons. It was a gigantic game of bluffing the nation. "'I am all for a religious cry,' said Taper. 'It means nothing, and, if successful, does not interfere with business when we are in.'" They did not possess brains, except of that peculiarly disagreeable sort that is successful in backstair intrigue. Mr. Taper's "political reading was confined to an intimate acquaintance with the *Red Book* and Beatson's *Political Index*, which he could repeat backwards." Tadpole "was to succeed by the aid of the Wesleyans, of which pious body he had suddenly become a fervent admirer." While Mr. Rigby was "a man who neither felt nor thought, but who possessed, in a very remarkable degree, a restless instinct for adroit baseness." And Lord Monmouth summed them all up in expressing his own great ambitions: "I see no means by which I can attain my object but by supporting Peel. After all, what is the end of all parties and all politics? To gain your object. I want to turn our coronet into a ducal one."

So it goes on. Disraeli holds them up to the public gaze, one by one—and most of them were drawn from life, remember—and then shakes the sawdust out of these dummy figures that pretended they were statesmen. This great Reform Bill tumult itself, which set all their tongues chattering in *Coningsby*: "'It appears to me to be in a nutshell,' said Lucian Gay, 'one party wishes to keep their old boroughs, and the other to get their new peers.'"

Of course, it has been said that all this is only dainty cynicism; that Disraeli had resolved to make his reputation by a sharp, bitter tongue; that we must not take him seriously. The accusation is dead against the facts. Disraeli was a mass of sympathetic emotions and sentimental passions, and not a cynic at all. All his cutting phrases about the politicians were not cynicism—they were simple truth. It was the politicians who started this rumour of cynicism, and have bluffed the public into believing it. On the contrary, Disraeli was the victim of every simple-hearted, honest creature who strolled across his pages. The tenderest lines in *Coningsby* are for Flora, who was too shy to succeed in life except as a gentle-hearted girl who was afraid to show her love—not likely to be the favourite of the true cynic. Then there are those "two young French ladies in their bonnets, whom he soon discovered to be actresses." They are most illuminating on their creator's mind; for they clearly delighted Disraeli as much as they did Coningsby, who found them brightening the last days of his bored grandfather. "They had the finest spirits in the world, imperturbable good temper, and an unconscious practical philosophy that defied the devil Care and all his work." Lord Monmouth had engaged their services because he was weary of orthodox society, and asked for "persons who had not been educated in the idolatry of Respectability." And he got the best value for his expenditure: "Clotilde and Ermengarde had wits as sparkling as their eyes," and how could one give higher praise to the latter, "who was so good-natured that she sacrificed even her lovers to her friends." They were no mean schemers these, trying, like Mr. Rigby, to keep all his lordship's money for themselves; indeed, they did their best to persuade him to forgive Coningsby, which would have saved that young gentleman an odd million or so. One feels certain that these are the people that Disraeli really appreciated and enjoyed, as he liked Caroline and Julia, the mill-girls in *Sybil*. No doubt he was stately and courteous to the fine society dames when he moved in political circles; but in his books they had to listen to many home-truths, and found themselves often waiting until their brilliant creator had spoken many affectionate phrases with their social inferiors.

What was Disraeli's historical explanation of this crew of sham statesmen who were misgoverning and plundering England? He said the aristocrats were a collection of nobles who had made themselves rich by robbing the Church of its lands at the Reformation; who (when they were well established in power after an odd hundred years' practice under the Tudors and the Stuarts) finally took over the power of the Crown itself by the Revolution of 1688. Since which time, to the days of Disraeli himself, England had been ruled by an oligarchy of selfish nobles, who had made the Houses of Parliament into instruments of tyranny over the people of England, and had ejected the Stuarts mainly because they stood in the way of aristocratic despotism over the democracy. The struggles of the days of Walpole, Chatham, Bute, North and the Younger Pitt had been the clever manœuvring of the nobles to maintain themselves in power; while, according to Disraeli, Bolingbroke and a few others had tried to restore the traditions of an earlier social system where a stronger Monarchy, with a living Church, protected the people from the undue oppression of the aristocrats and the plutocrats. Disraeli's charge against the oligarchy of the eighteenth century was that it was base in origin and base in policy. He said the old aristocracy practically disappeared with the Wars of the Roses; that the English peerage of his day was an illegitimate growth from "three sources: the spoliation of the Church; the open and flagrant sale of its honours by the elder Stuarts; and the boroughmongering of our own times."

His contempt for this sham nobility was one of the passions of Disraeli's life. "I never heard of a peer with an ancient lineage. The real old families of this country are to be found among the peasantry; the gentry, too, may lay some claim to old blood." As for these new peers: "They adopted Norman manners while they usurped Norman titles. They have neither the right of the Norman, nor did they fulfil the duty of the Norman: they did not conquer the land, and they do not defend it." Some people may think that Disraeli made a great deal too much fuss about the aristocrats, legitimate or illegitimate; but his point of view must be appreciated, for they are a fundamental part of his ideal society. When he cried down the sham aristocrats, he was not speaking as a disciple of the modern democratic theory that the people can best govern themselves. He believed no such thing. He was convinced that government must come from above; and that if the people wanted good government they must put the power into the hands of the right governors. He was not a modern European; we must remember that he was an Asiatic, to whom modern progress was an object of the gravest suspicion. Disraeli believed in Race (as he believed in few things else but liberty and the good taste that made a man an artist); and by race he was an Oriental, and therefore conceived of society as a body in which the democracy was balanced with an autocracy, in a manner which is almost inconceivable in modern Europe, but which was an accomplished fact in earlier periods even here. But this raises the whole question of Disraeli's conception of our national history. It is a most essential part of this man, and until it is understood, if not accepted, this statesman must be a complete enigma. Being a great man he will always—after the fullest explanations—remain a mystery.

Disraeli, in his novels, and especially in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, has given us an outline of English history. It is a little humiliating that we have had to await the arrival of an alien from the East to tell us the true history of our own race. For that is not far from the truth. The sketch of English history thrown off by this novelist in the light form of a tale for our leisure moments is perhaps the most brilliant, and, better still, the truest analysis of the national development in print. Many historians have given us more facts; none have drawn such logical conclusions from the evidence. There is a strange confidence in the public mind that, because a man has spent a life in examining documents and records, therefore he is the best qualified to pass judgment on the evidence collected. One might as reasonably expect the young ladies who collect the money at tea-shop doors to be the safest judges of the best way to invest and administer the receipts. The evidence is as urgently necessary as the cash if we are to get any satisfactory results; but the rôle of investigator and cashier is not the best qualification for being a philosopher in history or a genius in finance.

It would be ridiculous to claim for Disraeli that he was a professional historian; but it would be just as difficult to show that on any important point he was wrong in his facts or illogical in his conclusions. He had many advantages. He had, first, the supreme advantage of starting his study of English history with the blank mind of an Oriental, by whom our history had not been unconsciously digested as a superstition before it was consciously considered as a fact. It is the theory of our great jury system that the jurors should know nothing of the events until they are told them in court. Regarding English history, Benjamin Disraeli racially satisfied these principles. He came to the study with a clear mind. Then, again, he escaped the still more serious limitations of an education at a public school and a university. These are admirable institutions for turning out men of uprightness and gentlemen, but their wildest admirers would not claim that they have a standard of intellect which is equal to their standard of honour. In these institutions it is assumed that certain historical dogmas and creeds are beyond discussion; just as the clergy start by accepting the XXXIX Articles and the Apostles' Creed. Just as the Churchman believes in God the Father and his Son, so the Eton master and the Oxford don believe in William Pitt and his son, and in the dozens of political saints that are adored by the followers of that faith. At Harrow and Cambridge it is assumed that English history is the story of a continual progress from barbaric Saxons to imperial Britons. It begins with a simple-minded Alfred the Great, who, poor fellow, did his little best (being without tanks or machine-guns or aeroplanes); and it has now culminated in a glorious apocalypse of an "all red" route round the world and an Empire on which the sun never sets. At every British public school, high and low, it is assumed that the transition from St. Anselm as the King's adviser to Sir Robert Peel as Prime Minister of the Manchester School spells Progress and Development.

Disraeli accepted none of the myths of English history. He was an original thinker, and did not copy the opinions of his predecessors, as most of the students who work at the universities do. Do not let anyone be ungrateful for their patient search after the facts, where they are invaluable.

But when it comes to deduction from their facts, it is clear that they are venturing beyond their intellectual depth. Fortunately for Disraeli, there seems to have been nothing too deep for him ; it is one of the advantages of genius.

He refused to accept the principles of Progress laid down in the sixth form at Eton. He clung to the Past rather than plunge recklessly into the Future; he had just a touch of contempt for Stephen Morley (in *Sybil*), who " wishes to create the future." Disraeli, rightly or wrongly, had a profound conviction that it was impossible to break with the traditions of the Past ; we can only, he said, slowly develop them, without any sudden rupture. Strangely enough, it is only Eton and Oxford that really believe in the ideals of the *nouveaux riches*. Disraeli maintained that the modern historians were in grievous error in their reading of our national history, and he had a real respect for historical accuracy : he was the living image of his own creation, Mr. Hatton, " who had acquired, from his severe habits of historical research, a respect only for what was authentic." When modern historians and newspaper writers " statistically proved that the general condition of the people was much better at that moment than it had been at any known period of history," Disraeli puts into the mouth of old Gerard, the real hero of *Sybil*, the answer : " Ah ! yes, I know that style of speculation, your gentleman who reminds us that a working man now has a pair of cotton stockings, and that Henry the Eighth himself was not so well off. . . . I deny the premises ; I deny that the condition of the main body is better now than at any period of our history ; that it is as good as it has been at several. I say, for instance, the people were better clothed, better lodged, and better fed just before the War of the Roses than at this moment. . . . Look at the average term of life. . . . In this district, among the working classes, it is seventeen." To which Egremont replies : " In old days they had terrible pestilences." " But they touched all alike," said Gerard. " We have more pestilence now in England than we ever had, but it only reaches the poor."

Disraeli read English history, and it convinced him that the democracy of the Middle Ages, and of the Stuart times even, possessed a larger share of the nation's wealth and happiness than the people held in the days of modern "Progress." He admitted that there was enormous wealth in modern England; but he pointed out, first, that it was out of all proportion in the hands of a few members of the community; and, secondly, that modern wealth did not necessarily mean health and happiness, but, on the contrary, resulted in sheer stupidity and vulgar trivialities. Disraeli's opinion on the first point was formed after a tour through industrial England which he made (in 1844) with a few of his friends. He told the tale (softened, he said, to make it bearable for the public nerves) in *Sybil*. It is the usual ghastly tale that has been repeated a hundred thousand times since by every street-corner Socialist and by everyone who is sufficiently well educated to know the facts—and, to tell the truth, the public nerves have stood it with the robust vigour of a butcher trained in the slaughter-house. This is not the place to repeat the evidence; two or three sentences from *Sybil* are sufficient to show the line of the argument: "Naked to the waist, an iron chain fastened to a belt of leather runs between their legs clad in canvas trousers, while on hands and feet an English girl, for twelve, sometimes for sixteen hours a day, hauls and hurries tubs of coal up subterranean roads, dark, precipitous and plashy; circumstances that seem to have escaped the notice of the Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery. These worthy gentlemen, too, appear to have been singularly unconscious of the sufferings of the little trappers, which was remarkable, as many of them were in their own employ. . . . Infants of four and five years of age. . . . Their labour, indeed, is not severe, for that would be impossible, but it is passed in darkness and solitude. . . . Hour after hour passes, and all that reminds the infant trappers of the world they have quitted and that which they have joined is the passage of the coal waggons. . . ." And this was modern progress, the age of great industry and greater wealth. Inconceivable though it may appear, Disraeli refused to accept it with the favour or enthusiasm with which it was welcomed by the majority of the historians and economists of the age. He had carefully examined the civilization of Western Europe, and it failed to interest him—indeed, it revolted him.

He turned for mental relief to an age when there were monasteries instead of factories, and abbots and gentlemen instead of bankers and manufacturers and a sham nobility. "If we must have an aristocracy, I would rather that its younger branches should be monks and nuns than colonels without regiments, or housekeepers of royal palaces that exist only in name. Besides, see what an advantage to a minister if the unendowed aristocracy were thus provided for now. He need not, like a minister in these days, intrust the conduct of public affairs to individuals notoriously incompetent, appoint to the command of expeditions generals who never saw a field, make governors of colonies out of men who never could govern themselves, or find an ambassador in a broken dandy or a blasted favourite." He recalled the beauty of the old land: "In England and Wales alone there were of these institutions of different sizes, I mean monasteries, and chantries and chapels, and great hospitals, considerably upwards of three thousand; all of them fair buildings, many of them of exquisite beauty . . . establishments that were as vast and as magnificent and as beautiful as your Belvoirs and your Chatsworths, your Wentworths and your Stowes. . . . The monks were never non-resident. They expended their revenue among those whose labours had produced it . . . they made the country beautiful, and the people proud of their country."

Disraeli's claim that the monks were the protectors and trustees of the people's wealth, rather than of the self-interest of the Church, naturally roused the question why the people had not risen to save the monasteries from the robbers of the Reformation. The answer is: "They did, but too late. They struggled for a century, but they struggled against property, and they were beat." Since the Reformation, the history of England in Disraeli's judgment was the story of how these thieves of the Church's wealth had gradually collected into their hands almost all the possessions and all the governing power of the nation, and had dispossessed the people of both. The story finishes with a bitter thrust worthy of this master with the rapier: "I don't know whether the union workhouses will remove it. They are building something for the people at last. After an experiment of three centuries, your gaols being full and your treadmills losing something of their virtue, you have given us a substitute for the monasteries." The men who were there in the place of the communal monks Disraeli regarded as the greatest curse of England. They had divided their country into two classes—"the Rich and the Poor," which was the sub-title he gave to the romance *Sybil*. Whereas in the old days there had been distinct classes indeed, but with a juster balance of the duties and the rewards. The nobles had their privileges, no doubt, but they had their duties, and their share of the wealth was but a fraction of the sum that the modern masters have seized at the price of the degradation of the people. There were yeomen who owned their land in the merrier England, and the people had their common rights. Where were these in Disraeli's day? Helpless under the ruthless hand of such as the Earl de Mowbray of Mowbray Castle—this new apparition in English society. He had bought his title and his estates out of the fortune of his grandfather, late waiter of a London club, who had made that fortune by holding up the rice of India until its people were starving: "The great forestallers came to the rescue of the people over whose destinies they presided; and at the same time fed, and pocketed, millions." It revolted Disraeli that the grandson should be one of the lords of England because his grandfather, John Warren, had behaved like a knave in India.

Disraeli's conception of democracy was essentially Eastern; writing for Englishmen, he expressed it in terms of our own Middle Ages, because that was the nearest thing to it he could find in our Western civilization. He believed in all that fundamental freedom which was maintained in the widespreading local government which was the basis of the mediæval world. The historians have been attracted unduly by the barons, forgetting that the people then possessed rights which the new plutocrats of to-day have crushed out under the pompous names of Progress and Liberty. Still, Disraeli did not imagine that the people could govern themselves: "Dismiss from your mind these fallacious fancies. The People are not strong; the People never can be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication will end only in their suffering and confusion." He was writing in the days of the Charter struggles, and, whatever one may think of his theories, at least history so far has sadly confirmed them. We can trace in *Sybil* how the fine earnestness of the democracy was frittered away by the ignorance, the treachery, the mean ambitions, the endless conflicts of the leaders the people had set up to guide them. Sybil herself had been all enthusiasm for a purely popular movement—until it was tried; and then: "I was but a dreamer of dreams: I wake from my hallucinations, as others have done. . . . The people are not disciplined; their actions will not be, cannot be coherent." There are possibilities of democratic movement that the Eastern mind could scarcely be expected to grasp—but who can say that Disraeli was very far wrong when he wrote, though it may not be so true to-day?

Anyhow, Disraeli conceived of a perfect society where there would be no idle fancies of equality. There was to be a Crown that would receive back again much of the power that the greedy aristocrats of the Reformation and Hanoverian times had snatched from it; and this royal power was to be used in the future as Disraeli claimed, with much historical accuracy, that it had been used in the past—to protect the people of England from the tyranny of the wealthy. He claimed, and again there is vast historical evidence behind his assertion, that the Stuart Charles was a martyr in this cause. Then, the Church was once more to be made an independent force in national affairs, and was no longer to be the tool of the governing clique, with its bishops the nominees of a Minister of State. And the foundation of all was to be the People, for whose good the Crown and the Church were but a means to an end. "In the selfish strife of factions, two great existences have been blotted out of the history of England—the Monarch and the Multitude; as the power of the Crown has diminished, the privileges of the People have disappeared, till at length the sceptre has become a pageant, and its subject has again degenerated into a serf. . . . There is a whisper arising in this country that Loyalty is not a phrase, Faith not a delusion, and Popular Liberty something more diffusive and substantial than the profane exercise of the sacred rights of sovereignty by political classes." The one class for whom there was no room in Disraeli's Commonwealth was the class of the idle and vulgar rich.

But beneath all Disraeli's writings there is a deep undertone of a creed that is far wider, far greater, than anything that he expressed as a political dogma. The remedy for the troubles of modern society could not be put into the form of a parliamentary Bill, or a thousand of them. We began by saying that Disraeli was a poet. By an unlucky fate he became a politician, and much of what he saw was expressed in terms of politics. But it seems quite clear that this was not the ultimate thought in his mind. He wrote of politics in his novels for much the same reason that he put his political ideas into romantic form—in order that it might catch the ears of a public not too finely tuned to the higher notes of the universe. Being a wit and a dandy and a fashionable man about Town, he thought it might seem affected if it became known that Mr. Disraeli was convinced that what England wanted was a change of soul, and not a change of political parties or even the restoration of the Monarchy. But that was the actual truth. He had much more in common with the revivalist preacher than with most other fanatics. He thought England would not recover until she had a moral revival. "Their Charter is a coarse specific for our social evils. The spirit that would cure our ills must be of a deeper and finer mood," he wrote.

His moral change of heart would have considerably startled the revivalist preacher to whom he has just been rashly compared; not because Disraeli was in the least insincere in his call for the higher morality, but just because the professional revivalists are sometimes a little narrow in their conceptions, while this statesman had all the fickle fancies of the amateur. There are many sentences in Disraeli's confession of faith that must have made the orthodox enthusiasts very hopeful at the first glance. "Unless we bring man nearer to heaven, unless government become again divine, the insignificance of the human scheme must paralyse all effort." Except that it is better literature, that might pass inspection in a village conventicle. Again, another sentence from *Tancred* aroused hope: "I would lift up my voice to heaven, and ask, What is Duty, and what is Faith? What ought I to do, and what ought I to believe?" It is true there is the undertone of restless scepticism in the inquiry; but it certainly showed desire for spiritual truth if it could be found. Let no one imagine that Disraeli was anything but entirely sincere when he touched on religion. He was desperately in earnest, without a shadow of doubt, and this spirit lay very closely below the surface of all he wrote. His passionate sarcasm can generally be traced very quickly to a fierce moral conviction. He really meant what he said when he called for a great change of heart.

Yet it was not the change the revivalists contemplated. If they had been referred to Disraeli's chief book on religion, namely, *Tancred, or the New Crusade*, they must have been in some degree startled to note that the first chapter is an exceedingly charming and dainty disquisition on French cookery and French cooks. If the delights of the flesh are sinful, then these artists of the kitchen were not, surely, on the direct road to Paradise. For their little world had worldly aims. "'It is something to have served under Napoleon,' added Prevost, with the grand air of the Imperial kitchen. 'Had it not been for Waterloo I should have had the cross. But the Bourbons and the cooks of the Empire never could understand each other. . . . When Monsieur passed my soup of Austerlitz untasted, I knew the old family was doomed.'" They may have been as sincere as the revivalists, but it is patent that they were seeking different crosses. Perhaps it will be better to cease using, in connection with Disraeli's faith, that much confusing word "religion." It is usually held to connote some kind of dogmatic belief that priests can put into a creed and theologians can debate in class-rooms with their ecclesiastical pupils. There is singularly little of creed or theology, in the limited sense, in anything Disraeli has to say on religion. His moral convictions are much nearer akin to the language of the poets and the wit of the wisest men of the world; and a great deal of it is expressed with the flavour of aggressive sarcasm which certainly does not remind one of the primitive Christian faith.

That amazing portrait of the bishop in *Tancred* gives many hints of what Disraeli meant by religion. The Duke of Bellamont desired his son to go into Parliament, whereas the young gentleman on coming of age expressed a desire to worship at the holy tomb in Palestine. He was disgusted with politics, even before he entered political life. He first demanded a faith and a conviction of duty. The Duchess, his mother, was surely reasonable in thinking that if anyone could supply such desirable convictions it must be her favourite bishop. His utter failure to do so is a concise summary of Disraeli's measurement of orthodox Christianity. His sketch of the bishop is one of the masterpieces of English literature. The Duchess had already told us that he was "a great statesman as well as the first theologian of the age." He had sprung into early fame by proclaiming that Ireland was on the point of shaking herself free from the Church of Rome and coming into the Protestant fold: a declaration by which that earnest Protestant, the Duchess of Bellamont, "instantly recognized the man of God." Strangely enough, she continued to believe in his prophetic insight, notwithstanding that "the impending second Reformation did chance to take the untoward form of the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, followed in due season by the destruction of Protestant bishoprics, the sequestration of Protestant tithes, and the endowment of Maynooth." And then Disraeli tells us why this bishop had become the most famous in the land.

"He combined a great talent for action with very limited powers of thought . . . stimulated by an ambition that knew no repose, and with a capacity for mastering details. . . . He was one of those leaders who are not guides. . . . The bustling intermeddler was unable to supply society with a single solution. . . . All his quandaries terminated in the same catastrophe—a compromise. Abstract principles with him ever ended in concrete expediency. . . . The bishop, always ready, had in the course of his episcopal career placed himself at the head of every movement in the Church which others had originated, and had as regularly withdrawn at the right moment, when the heat was over, or had become, on the contrary, excessive." It was to such a man that Tancred was sent in his spiritual difficulties. The interview was mutually unsatisfactory. The bishop, having neither fixed principles nor a sincere faith, quickly tied himself into an undignified knot : " he was lost in a maze of phrases, and afforded his pupil not a single fact." Tancred appeals to him to say how society may be governed by God rather than by man. All the bishop can point out is his great hope that there will soon be a bishop in Manchester. " But I want to see an angel at Manchester," insists Tancred —and the interview obviously cannot continue.

It is little to be wondered at that the bishop could not satisfy Tancred (or Disraeli) out of the wisdom of his palace library : for neither wanted a theology. After reading what Disraeli had to plead for religion, one has the impression that he would not have made many inquiries concerning a man's creed when he was once satisfied that he loved the beautiful and possessed all that varied collection of virtues which one sums up as an honest heart. He probably never drew any character he respected more than Walter Gerard, who died for his convictions that England should again be made a place of beauty instead of a refuse-heap at the mouth of a coal-pit—he was, in short, an artist and a man of reason. Perhaps, if the whole were known, it may be that Disraeli would rather have had a man gifted with a sense of beauty than with a gift of complete truthfulness. It may be that his love for the truth grew rather from his artistic sense than from his moral convictions. After all, the artist's mind is the realist's mind—quite contrary to the common opinion that would call him a sentimentalist. The eye of the artist sees more acutely and accurately than the eye of the average man. Now, to see accurately is to see the truth, and to realize the truth is to know that dishonesty is a clumsy thing that does not pay in the long run. Disraeli wanted men to be honest and just with each other because he had so keen an eye that it told him that England (and other places) was miserable because it was ruled by men who were selfish or dishonest or stupid, or all three. He called for a " New Crusade " that would give them great ideals, moral convictions, and a determination to be cultured people before they were millionaires or any other sort of worldly success. He may have called his creed Christianity, but it was something which can be found in all the creeds, whether they be of pagans or Christians, or of poet or priest.

It was a sportive chance that threw Disraeli on the shores of England; he could scarcely have been more out of place if Fate had carried him a little further north and landed him at the Pole. Every fibre of him had the love of warmth and colour. It is clear from a thousand passages in his books that his ideals were those of the pagan. The more emotional of his readers will think of Tancred as the hero who went to the East to worship at the tomb of his Saviour; but the more studiously minded will remember that on the last page we find him at the feet of Eva. He went to seek a Faith; is it quite by chance that he found a woman who " presented the perfection of Oriental beauty, such as it existed in Eden?" Disraeli's religion was very real and true, without doubt, but his paganism was the deeper note. His ancestors had been nomads of the desert before they found the One God; and Disraeli was a mysterious survival of the past in a modern world, where he was always rebellious and ill at ease.

This strange being who aspired to rule (and did rule) England had the utmost contempt for our whole civilization—which was only natural, since he was a pagan. What is unnatural is that he should ever have desired to rule us and that he should have succeeded. When he was in his twenty-fourth year or so, he published a little book, *Popanilla*, in which he told us exactly what he thought of us and our whole social system. He did not think much of it. There is scarcely a line of it which does not express utter contempt for all the things we have been so proud of doing in the world. The book contains Disraeli's philosophy of life: it contains his creed for this world, as *Tancred* (written twenty years afterwards) professes to tell us more of his creed for the next; and there is much that is common to both. *Popanilla* is one of the most amazingly brilliant social skits that English literature has produced. When the last page has been reached there is not much left of the Utilitarians, the Economists, the Governing Set, and Modern Society in general. This vast structure called "civilization," instead of being an admirable thing, appears to be half a stupid blunder and half a crime.

The story begins on the pagan island of Fantaisie, where nothing much happens except perpetual summer and continuous dancing and love-making all the delicious nights long. The inhabitants are an "innocent and a happy, though a voluptuous and ignorant race. They have no manufactures, no commerce, no agriculture and no printing-presses . . . for intellectual amusement they have a pregnant fancy and a ready wit." It is a common superstition in the West of Europe that the acquiring of knowledge has been the foundation of all our happiness and prosperity. Disraeli turned the tables on us and showed how a shipwrecked box of books of learning almost brought moral and material disaster to this idyllic island. The evil books fell into the hands of an unfortunate islander who was hunting for a lost lock of his mistress's hair. Had he found it, all would have been well, perhaps.

But instead, he read the whole box of books, and "now discovered with dismay that he and his fellow-islanders were nothing more than a horde of useless savages." He rushed to explain to the king the utter folly of being merely happy—it did not pay. "If there were no utility in pleasure, it was quite clear that pleasure could profit no one. If, therefore, it were unprofitable, it was injurious;

because that which does not produce a profit is equivalent to a loss; therefore pleasure is a losing business; consequently pleasure is not pleasant." He showed the king very clearly that "the development of utility is therefore the object of our being," and that man is "a developing animal. Development is the discovery of utility." They must learn to disregard this low pursuit of pleasure, for "a nation might be extremely happy, extremely powerful, and extremely rich, although every individual member of it might at the same time be miserable, dependent and in debt." And so this speech goes on until: "He finished by re-urging in strong terms the immediate development of the island. In the first place, a great metropolis must be instantly built, because a great metropolis always produces a great demand; and moreover, Popanilla had some legal doubts whether a country without a capital could in fact be considered a State." If they would only apply themselves earnestly to developments, "Popanilla had no hesitation in saying that a short time could not elapse ere, instead of passing their lives in a state of unprofitable ease and useless enjoyment, they might reasonably expect to be the terror and astonishment of the universe, and to be able to annoy every nation of any consequence." In fact, said this audacious Disraeli (who desired to become Prime Minister), as clearly as burlesque would allow him to say, the islanders were to embark on the attempt to become another England.

But there was more wisdom in Fantaisie than this hysterical student suspected in his condition of intellectual drunkenness. When his speech ended, the monarch had a fit of laughter and said: "I have not an idea what this man is talking about, but I know that he makes my head ache; give me a cup of wine, and let us have a dance." Eventually, to make quite sure that this dangerous habit of learning should not spread, the islanders put the only lunatic the island possessed—the man who had read the books—into a canoe, and set him adrift to seek another land that suited him better. He discovered England, the island of Vraibleusia, with its capital city of Hubbabub. The rest is a shrieking pantomime of brilliant wit; the sum total is that it laughs the whole nation off the stage. Our liberty, our finance, the bankers, the National Debt, our officials, smart society, the land system, the law, the Cabinet —in short, everything about us—is made into a laughing-stock, where all the laughs are on one side. England is "shown up." Of course, Disraeli was quite safe : there were not many people who were bright enough to see they were being laughed at. If it were not for the dull, men like this Jewish wit-philosopher would not be safe.

The important thing the book teaches is that Disraeli totally rejected the ideals of modern society : he thought the development theory stupid and the laws of utility mainly folly. And, in any case, he made it quite plain that he considered the islanders of Fantaisie the wiser people. The imagined perfection of the system of Vraibleusia was a sheer myth : the inhabitants thought they were a great and a wealthy people, whereas they were tied in a knot of contradictions that left only confusion and worry. Even their liberty was a delusion ; for "free constitutions are apt to be misunderstood until half of the nation are bayoneted and the rest imprisoned." The dull people, forgetting Oliver Cromwell and many more, said this was a stupid exaggeration ; but almost all Disraeli's wit is based on sound historical facts, and there is scarcely a line of this *Popanilla* that might not be used as a historical text-book. Disraeli did not build an England of his own imagination ; he took the land as it existed. The imagination was all on the side of the people who thought—and still think—that our modern system is the creation of rational men and women. Disraeli said, as clearly as wit could say, that it was entirely irrational.

Such being the Disraeli who wrote and thought, there remains the other Disraeli who went into politics. It was a double life indeed ; and it is interesting to discover from Disraeli himself what was the nature of the link between the two. We have seen how his wife had recorded that her husband was exceedingly ambitious to become famous, and that he had chosen politics for his career. He was surely wise ; for he had listened to the debates in the Houses and he knew he could easily win in a game like that. He had brains and he had the gift of a ready tongue. There was a good deal of the latter quality in Parliament, but the intellectual fuel was not overabundant. Anyhow, Disraeli chose politics, and it is unlikely that he had failed to measure the factors of the problem. When, in his early life, he had frankly told Lord Melbourne, " I want to be Prime Minister," that typical member of the governing class had been equally frank : " You must put all these foolish notions out of your head," adding the details that for such a post the stringent regulations were " old blood, high rank, great fortune and greater ability." By which answer his lordship proved himself to be a very foolish prophet and a very conceited man. Of course, in a worldly sense Melbourne was right. What was wrong about his estimate was the usual bad judgment of the whole governing class—he put ability last on the list of the qualifications. As it happened, Disraeli had enough ability to swamp all the attached schedule of necessary virtues. He could circle round the Lord Melbournes and their class as a racing yacht can circle round a barge. Even all their blood and rank and fortune could not pull them through when they met a man with brains.

Nevertheless, the young Disraeli could scarcely know this—a great deal of recent history was against him. For a hundred and fifty years England had submitted to the rule of men such as Melbourne had described. But Disraeli had good grounds for his confidence. What is more difficult to understand is his decision that the game was worth the trouble, or, still more, that it could be adjusted to his moral convictions. There is no doubt of the sincerity of the religious and social creed that he had expounded in his books. It was a very lofty and noble creed, whereas he had himself proved that political life was a cesspool of meanness. Even his own great gift of speech he had described in *Popanilla* as one of the chief dangers of popular freedom : a glib tongue could snatch away more liberty than it won. It was one of the most profoundly true things that Disraeli ever said, and the concealment of that truth is one of the chief necessities of the political agitator, who lives by his tongue as honester men live by making chairs or wheelbarrows. On page after page Disraeli had exposed the futilities and sordidness of politics. " It is hardly possible," he wrote in *Coningsby*, " that a young man could rise from the study of these annals without a confirmed disgust for political intrigue; a dazzling practice, apt at first to fascinate youth, for it appeals at once to our invention and our courage, but one which should only be the resource of the second-rate. Great minds must trust to great truths and great talents for their rise, and nothing else."

He himself proved that politics was one long compromise, and often in vain. He did not even believe in the representative system: when Tancred left for Palestine he said: " I go to a land that has never been blessed by that fatal drollery called a representative government." Disraeli believed in a strong monarch, and he believed in strong and active municipal administration. But then he did not ask to be made a king or a town councillor—he went into the House of Commons. He had defined the alternatives: " Was it to be a Tory government, or an Enlightened-Spirit-of-the-Age Liberal-Moderate-Reform government? Was it to be a government of high philosophy or of low practice; of principle or of expediency; of great measures or of little men? A government of statesmen or of clerks? Of Humbug or Humdrum?" Note the final contrast: it all came to Humbug or Humdrum in the end. At the bottom of his heart Disraeli knew he was what he made Sidonia say for him: " I am and must ever be but a dreamer of dreams" —and yet he became a politician.

He knew that meant an end of his dreams. He was continually warning his readers of the danger of infection in public life. As he launched his hero and heroine on the last page of *Coningsby* he wrote: " They stand on the threshold of public life. . . . Will they maintain in august assemblies and high places the great truths which, in study and solitude, they have embraced? Or will their courage exhaust itself in the struggle? . . . Will their skilled intelligence subside into being the adroit tool of a corrupt party? Will Vanity confound their fortunes or Jealousy wither their sympathies?" And that was not the most hopeless side of the problem; for he might have had sufficient sureness that he could resist temptation to betray his principles. But he knew that the irony of political life was that high principles were as impossible in that atmosphere as a fish is impossible on the dry land or a quadruped in the sea. His incorruptible Sybil "found to her surprise that great thoughts have very little to do with the business of the world; that human affairs, even in an age of revolution, are the subject of compromise; and that the essence of compromise is littleness." She saw that the popular leaders, picked out by the people themselves, were, like the rest, filled with "wild ambitions and sinister and selfish ends." The two earnest and sincere labour leaders of *Sybil*, Dandy Mick and Devilsdust, became "the firm of Radley, Mowbray and Co. . . . and will probably furnish in time a crop of members of Parliament and peers of the realm."

Disraeli went into Parliament as a career, because he had no great hopes of achieving anything except his ambitions; his principles he never imagined he could reach. He did not believe in any possibility of sudden change: being a historian and a sane man, he knew that men can never force the pace of their affairs; they are always the sons of their fathers and the inheritors of the virtues and vices of the last generations; and they will transmit their own to the next, in great part. The reformer, therefore, is rather the spectator at a play than an originator of some new plan; and even if he be an actor on the stage, he can but speak the lines set down in his part. Reform in Disraeli's mind was little more than the continuation of history. When Mr. Cassilis is explaining the "Young England" movement which summed up Disraeli's ideals in public life, he said: "They say it requires a deuced deal of history. One must brush up one's Goldsmith. Canterton used to be the fellow for history at White's. He was always boring one with William the Conqueror, Julius Cæsar, and all that sort of thing." But if Reform was only the next chapter of history, Disraeli had made up his mind to be something approaching a Conqueror himself.

In short, Disraeli was a real Democrat : he believed that we can never get beyond the traditions and desires of the nation as a great whole : " If the nation that elects the Parliament be corrupt, the elected body will resemble it. The nation that is corrupt deserves to fall. But this only shows that there is something to be considered beyond forms of government, national character. And herein mainly should we repose our hopes. If a nation be led to aim at the good and the great, depend upon it, whatever be its form, the Government will respond to its convictions and its sentiments." Most of the things they discussed in Parliament were idle fancies in Disraeli's reading of political science—they simply did not matter. He thought constitutional changes rather hindered reform than brought it nearer ; and he must have been laughing in his sleeve during most of the debates wherein he figured so brilliantly in the Houses. " In a word, true wisdom lies in the policy which would effect its ends by the influence of opinion, and yet by the means of existing forms." It would be the truest reading of Disraeli's record if we regard his books, up to *Tancred*, at least, as the main part of his career—when he was educating his fellow-citizens to think accurately and to feel nobly. For the rest of his life—his political career—he took to politics as others take to golf or archæology or collecting beetles, as a hobby for one's spare time or one's retired years. The books were the real Disraeli, in his serious mood. The speeches in Parliament, the high offices of State, were merely the flavouring sauces of life, the liqueur after dinner. Disraeli's great political success displayed not his strength, but his weakness, his human frailty, which could not resist the applause of the crowd, which insisted that he should strive to be great, not in the opinion of the wise, but in the opinion of to-morrow morning's newspaper leader. We read Disraeli's novels for the good of our morals and our intellects—and their wit is thrown in as a reward. But his political career may be neglected unless we seek for the amusement of a first-class tale of adventure. "Adventures are to the adventurous," he wrote; and the man who started his political career by suggesting to the politicians in possession that the lowness of their principles was only equalled by the meanness of their methods, who declared that the hated race to which he belonged was one of the greatest and noblest factors in history—such a man had clearly made up his mind to a frontal attack in broad daylight. He was surely the lightest-hearted adventurer who ever set forth with his fortune on his back. In this case the fortune was entirely in his head, though his enemies might have hinted that a large part of it was on his embroidered waistcoats.

His early career in the House of Commons (it began in 1837) was the finest part of it—when he was untrammelled by office and a freebooter of the reputations of his opponents. Whenever he had a moment to spare in the political moves, he was maintaining the principles of his philosophy of life, the wit of it as well as the matter. He was his best real self in those earlier years—with all his contempt for the insincerity and dull pomp of politics. A letter to his wife relates his first sitting and the election of the Speaker: "Shaw Lefevre proposed, and Strutt of Derby seconded, Abercromby. Both were brief; the first commonplace, the other commonplace and coarse; all was tame. Peel said a very little, very well. Then Abercromby, who looked like an old laundress, mumbled and moaned some dullness, and was then carried to a chair, and said a little more amid a faint dull cheer." Disraeli succeeded in the House of Commons because he had a fine contempt for it. He was howled down in his maiden speech, when he told its dull "old laundress" that the great Reform Act which they thought such a miracle of political wisdom had been useless: "the stain of boroughmongering had only assumed a deeper and darker hue," and elections were more corrupt than before. The House, which is tolerant of trivial party squabbles, at this attack on its sacred system of privileges behaved rather after the manner of a football crowd that has taken a dislike to the referee. It was a sign that this man was not only the opponent of half the House, but a radical objector to the whole of it.

Strangely enough, Peel, who ought to have been able to judge men by this time, imagined that he had gained a valuable supporter in the new member. It only showed what a dull-witted fellow Sir Robert was ; for Disraeli made his commanding position in Parliament by a series of attacks on this Prime Minister and his policy which not merely won the astonished admiration of the Commons, but set all Europe—which could scarcely be expected to take our internal politics very seriously—into shrieks of laughter. To set up the free-lance Disraeli to debate against the established Peel had the natural result. Peel came out of the contest as an earnest curate would emerge from a debate with Mr. Bernard Shaw. Peel was half drowned. He was saved, when it came to votes, because there was a majority of dull people in the House like himself. But each night, as he was pulled out of the torrent of Disraeli's brilliant sarcasm, it was a pitiable object that was hauled on the bank

The subject-matter of these famous speeches against Peel mainly centred round the Corn Laws. But it was much more than a question of finance, of custom duties, of cheap food. The struggle between the old England of farmers and the new England of factories had at last come to the crisis. The significance of Disraeli's position in our political history is that he was the beginning of the political reaction against the Industrial Revolution. When he entered the House of Commons in 1837, the full horrors of the new capitalist factory system had arrived. The new school of statesmen appeared to approve of this system as a whole, however much they might want to soften its rough corners. Even a man who called for Factory Acts and Truck Acts might still be glad that the Industrial Revolution had happened. Peel and Bright and Cobden were the men who represented all that the new industry meant in our history ; and they were followed by the Gladstones and the high finance of the present-day Cabinets. Disraeli was the first great statesman to cry halt in our mad progress. As we have seen, in *Popanilla* he poured scorn on the whole modern system of economics and politics. He flatly refused to accept the popular cry that Utility was the supreme test of social wealth. It was not to give the farmers high prices that he fought to preserve the Corn Laws; that was only an incident in his desire to preserve the agriculture of England because it was a healthy human tradition that the farmer is the base of all the best nations. A factory might pay higher profits, which might be a sufficient argument for a materialist like Peel or the Quaker Bright. But Disraeli, who did not measure the happiness of man by his balance-sheet, thought that it was worth preserving English cornfields, even if we paid a higher price for our bread.

The great struggle went against Disraeli. The manufacturers got cheap corn, which meant cheaper labour; the working man was convinced that cheap bread was a clear gain for himself; so Disraeli—the inspirer of the resistance to Free Trade—persuaded the Tory party that it must accept the verdict of the majority. There are not many men who sacrifice their principles in order to remain a democrat! This battle, the first of his political career, brought the ideals of his books to the test. It was a sharp lesson to him that he was a dreamer in an age that was very wide awake in the work of making money. He never really believed that the ideals of his books would be practical politics in the House of Commons; and his career became the rather pointless journey of that day-to-day manœuvring which is the normal existence of the ordinary political leader. It would be hard to find any case where Disraeli did anything which was a betrayal of his ideals; but it would be equally hard to give any case where he did much to make any fundamental change in the direction of his old dreams. But one great line of policy certainly owes much to him, if not the main credit. The passionate protests of *Sybil* against the horrors of industrial life fixed social reform as the perpetual disturber of the peace of the callous Houses of Parliament.

Disraeli's social novels were the creative force of that "Young England" party which for a few years, in the forties, looked as though it might be the beginning of a new phase of national politics. It was but a very rapidly passing flicker of light in a very dark world. The men who appear as the heroes of Disraeli's novels were in real life the leaders of "Young England," but unfortunately they also had to act as the rank and file—for there were not enough followers to supply privates as well as officers in this army of idealists. Perhaps it was Disraeli's speech, in 1839, in defence of the Chartists that founded the little group. When the House of Commons refused to receive the Great Petition, this young member (who Peel thought was going to be a support for his party of plutocrats) told the chamber that "the rights of labour are as sacred as the rights of property." But he was almost the only brave and wise man present. The natural result of this insolent rejection on the part of their masters was rioting, which is the usual result of incapable statesmen. In 1843 "Young England" had its first pitched battle with the orthodox politicians in an attempt to prevent the continued coercion of Ireland by physical force by the crude renewal of the Arms Act. Disraeli's speech was a hint to the House of Commons that at last it had a member who knew something about English and Irish history: he informed his audience that he had "no faith in any statesman who attempts to remedy the evils of Ireland who is either ignorant of the past or who will not deign to learn from it." He said that the Bill before the House was so futile that it was not worth a journey through either lobby; he could only hope that a real attempt would be made to penetrate "the mystery of this great misgovernment," and bring to an end "a state of things that is the bane of England and the opprobrium of Europe." Disraeli was perhaps the only English statesman of the nineteenth century who could have put Irish government on an endurable basis, for he was almost the only one who combined historical knowledge with imagination and the nature of a gentleman. But there were never enough other gentlemen of imagination to give him a working majority, and dull stupidity is still in control of Dublin Castle.

Disraeli's old ideals had another breathing space in the new Reform agitation which preceded his Franchise Bill of 1867. The great Act of 1832 had merely enfranchised the middle classes; the Act of 1867 was the first surrender of political voting power to the poor, which had been the cry of the figures of romance in *Coningsby* and *Sybil.* Disraeli declared his hope that by this measure he had helped to resist the advance of a commercial plutocracy to supreme power; and he had done it, he believed, by thus assisting "the invigorating energies of an educated and enfranchised people." This, he reminded his audience, was his avowed purpose as long ago as 1846, when he had made his fight against the repeal of the Corn Laws—a repeal which he saw meant the strengthening of the middle classes, who, in Disraeli's mind, were the foundation of industrial tyranny over the poor, in a far more grinding way than the landlords had ever been able (even if willing) to exercise it. On the surface the Reform Bill of 1867, when it emerged from the debates, was in many clauses drafted by Gladstone and Bright; and Lord Cranborne, the future Lord Salisbury (the Prime Minister of later days), was full of sneers at the insincerity of the creator of the Bill in adopting any clauses which would get it through the division lobbies. But there is every sort of proof that Disraeli was only too glad to have his Tory supporters forced into a more democratic measure. And the comparison of the careers of the Tory Disraeli and the Liberal Gladstone will leave little doubt that the former was a natural friend of the poor, while the latter regarded them as useful factors in his voting strength at a general election. Mr. Gladstone was soon to show his real nature by passing an Act which almost crushed Trade Unionism, which Disraeli saved by promptly repealing the Liberal Act, and then substituting a new Act of 1875, when he returned to power. It was during this same term of office that the Tory Government passed a batch of social measures which were the first systematic attempt to devise a system of social reform. Such were the Factory and Workshop Act of 1878; the Artisans' Dwellings Act, 1875; the Friendly Societies Act; the Merchant Shipping Act, and the Enclosure of Commons Act, which for the first time considered the welfare of the general public when enclosures were made. A poor little group, perhaps, for the dreamer of the moral and economic revolution of England; but what can an idealist do in a world that is dull?

Of the Peace of Berlin—the "peace with honour"—of such events as the buying of the Suez Canal shares, the history-books are full. They were the least important, the least ennobling things that Disraeli did, so we naturally hear most about them from those who think quietly along the well-beaten tracks. But the proclamation (in 1877) of the Queen of England as Empress of India was not merely the display of full-blooded Imperialism that the West End clubs and the East End pubs imagined and hoped it was. From the days of *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, Disraeli had looked to the monarchy with a longing that it might be strengthened to protect the people against the oligarchy of the rich. Wrongly or rightly, he thought there was less danger of despotism under a strong monarchy than under a strong oligarchy, or even under a Parliament which in practice still only represented the rich and middle classes—for when the poor had votes, how often did they guard their own interests? Having the common-sense eyes of the man of imagination, Disraeli saw, quite clearly, that they voted as their masters ordered. This strengthening of the Crown of England by adding the Empire of India to it (however unwise and unjust to the Indians, as some may think) was yet in Disraeli's eyes a movement towards democracy rather than to Imperialism. It was part of his old ideals.

The little personalities of a man count for so much more than his intellect and his ideals. If one really wants to know how a man will behave in the House of Commons, then watch him in his moments of leisure, in his hobbies rather than in the lobbies—indeed, at any moment except when he is on the political benches. Watch him behind the scenes, not when he is behind the footlights and the curtain is up. It is worth remembering in one's judgment of this man that he (like his contemporary Palmerston) was continually behaving like a gentleman when too many of his colleagues in the political world were behaving in manner more appropriate to cads. Time after time, when he thought it was for the interest of his party or of the nation, Disraeli offered to stand on one side, surrendering claims for office which were irresistible if he had pressed them. There was the day in 1852 when he offered to give up the Leadership in the Commons to Palmerston and the right to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer to Gladstone, if this would enable Lord Derby to form a strong Ministry to rescue England from the utter mismanagement of the Crimean War. It is necessary to remember that much of the muddle and confusion had occurred, and the late Government of Lord Aberdeen had fallen, largely because of the recklessly selfish conduct of Lord John Russell, who at this moment could apparently be loyal neither to his friends nor to his country. Again, in 1858, when Derby offered the India Office to Gladstone, Disraeli made the most generous advances to enable his rival to accept—and for all his thanks he got the stiff reply which one would have expected from the most narrow-minded political leader of the nineteenth century. One other example: Disraeli refused to make party capital out of the personal triumph of the Berlin Congress, because he believed that these matters of international importance should never sink to the level of politicians' squabblings.

But, candidly, to continue to discuss Benjamin Disraeli's practical life after learning the ideals of his life in his books must inevitably bring the disappointment of a dull third act after a brilliant first. He was infinitely more interesting, more instructive, and more lovable than his contemporary statesmen. But he lived in an age which could not follow the sweep of his Oriental imagination—an age which would probably have adopted the manners of the East, his home, and stoned him if he had been understood. Perhaps the most pregnant sentence he wrote (in *Sybil* in 1844) summed up his period and explained the cause of his failure to reform it: " If a spirit of rapacious covetousness, desecrating all the humanities of life, has been the besetting sin of England for the last century and a half, since the passing of the Reform Act the altar of Mammon has blazed with triple worship. To acquire, to accumulate, to plunder each other by virtue of philosophic phrases, to propose a Utopia to consist only of WEALTH and TOIL—this has been the breathless business of enfranchised England for the last twelve years, until we are startled from our voracious strife by the wail of intolerable serfage." If a man thought that, it was clear that there was no political party which would assist him. As a politician he was doomed to failure from the day he started—a somewhat doleful thought, when one remembers that he was the most wide-visioned statesman that England has produced these three hundred years. But then, during that time, politics has been a trade for the crafty and the shallow, who have succeeded beyond their expectations.

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